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(Oct. 8th 1849)

LECTURES
IN
DIVINITY.

BY THE LATE

GEORGE HILL, D.D.

PRINCIPAL OF ST. MARY'S COLLEGE, ST. ANDREWS.

EDITED FROM HIS MANUSCRIPT,

BY HIS SON,

THE REV. ALEXANDER HILL,

MINISTER OF DAILLY.

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P R E F A C E

B Y T H E E D I T O R.

THE author of the following Lectures was appointed Professor of Divinity in 1788, and completed the plan which he had formed for himself, in about four years. In every succeeding year, he revised with unwearied care that part of his course which he intended to read to his students; and not a few of the Lectures appear to have been recently transcribed. He took no steps himself for publishing them as a whole; but he is known to have had this in contemplation; and at his death he consigned them to the Editor, in such terms as implied that the publication of them would not be in opposition to his wishes.

It will be agreeable, the Editor believes, to the wishes of that large proportion of the ministers of the church of Scotland, who went from the hall of St. Mary's College with unfeigned respect for the character and talents of the Author, to peruse those prelections which commanded the attention of their earlier years. And he is well persuaded, that there are many, who, from personal attachment to the Author, or from a knowledge of his high reputation, are anxious to become acquainted with his sentiments, on points so important as those which his Lectures embrace.

These considerations alone, however, would not have induced the Editor to disclose his father's manuscripts to the public eye. In the conclusion of his opening address, as Professor of Di-

vinity, the Author pledged himself by making this solemn declaration: "Under the blessing and direction of the Almighty in whose hands I am, and to whom I must give account, no industry or research, no expense of time or of thought, shall be wanting on my part, to render my labours truly useful to the students of divinity in this college." It was under a strong impression that this pledge has been fully redeemed:—in the firm belief that the publication of his theological lectures, one of the principal fruits of the Author's active and laborious life, will do honour to his memory;—and in the anxious hope that the object for which the Lectures were written, to teach and to defend "the truth as it is in Jesus," may be thus more largely attained, that the Editor resolved to present them to the world.

He cannot withdraw from the charge, which he has felt it both a duty and a pleasure to fulfil, without expressing the increased veneration, which an attentive perusal of the Lectures has excited in his bosom for the Author; and without offering a fervent prayer to God, that the church, of which he formed so distinguished a member, may never want men, on whom the example of his diligence and success may freely operate, who may be equally eminent in biblical and theological learning, and may cherish his liberal, enlightened, and truly Christian views.

The Author himself divided his course into Books, and Chapters, and Sections, first when he printed the heads of his Lectures for the use of his students, and afterwards in a larger work, entitled "Theological Institutes." In the present publication, the same arrangement has been adopted. This has necessarily led to some inconsiderable changes on the Lectures, as they were read from the chair. But the Editor has been scrupulous in making as few other alterations on the manuscript as possible. The introductory discourse to the students, which related to the sentiments and character essential for them to maintain, has been much abridged, as it bore in some measure

upon local circumstances in the University of St. Andrews. And towards the end of this work, it will be found, by a reference to the notes, that those parts of the course have been omitted, which the Author himself had previously given to the public.

It was the wish of the Editor to subjoin a note of reference to every quotation made by the Author. But in the manuscript it frequently happened that there was nothing to lead him particularly to the passage or authority cited. In his remote situation he had not access to all the books which it was necessary to consult; and even with the assistance of his friends, he has not been uniformly successful in comparing the quotations with the works from which they are extracted.

He has annexed to different chapters the names of the books which the Author was accustomed to recommend to his students, with some of the comments which he made on them. His remarks, however, were usually delivered without having been written; and hence, comparatively few are preserved.

It may be thought, that the printed lists of books recommended are far from being complete. But it is to be considered, that, at the commencement of the Author's labours, the library of St. Andrews was deficient in modern theological works; that those which were more immediately useful were only gradually procured; that it was far from being his object to load the memory, or to distract the attention of his students by multifarious reading; and that, as the business of his profession occupied his mind to the end of his days, it is probable that there was no publication of moment, which he had an opportunity of perusing, of which he did not in his class-room deliver an opinion.

MANSE OF DAILLY,
April 23, 1821.

P R E F A C E

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

It was in contemplation to present the following course of Lectures complete, by subjoining to this edition the View of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland, and the Counsels respecting the Duties of the Pastoral Office, which were published during the Author's lifetime. But being unwilling to make alterations on a work which has been so favourably received, the Editor sends it forth in the state in which it originally appeared, only freed, he trusts, from many of the errata which had crept into the first edition. Such readers as may wish to peruse those parts of the course which are not contained in this work, will find a note referring to them at the end of the volume.

MANSE OF DAILLY,

April 21, 1825.

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LECTURES IN DIVINITY.



BOOK I.

EVIDENCES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.



INTRODUCTORY DISCOURSE.

THE professed design of students in divinity is to prepare for a most honourable and important office, for being workers together with God in that great and benevolent scheme, by which he is restoring the virtue and happiness of his intelligent offspring, and for holding, with credit to themselves and with advantage to the public, that station in society, by the establishment of which the wisdom of the state lends its aid to render the labours of the servants of Christ respectable and useful. Learning, prudence, and eloquence never can be so worthily employed as when they are devoted to the improvement of mankind; and a good man will find no exertion of his talents so pleasing as that by which he endeavours to make other men such as they ought to be. We expect the breast of every student of divinity to be possessed with these views. If any person is devoid of them, if he despises the office of a minister of the gospel, if the character of his mind is such as to derive no satisfaction from the employments of that office, or from the object towards which they are directed, he ought to turn his attention to some other pursuit. He cannot expect to attain eminence or to enjoy comfort in a station, for which he carries about with him an inward disqualification; and there is an hypocrisy most disgraceful and most hurtful to his moral character in all the external appearances of preparing for that station.

In attempting to lead you through that course of study which is immediately connected with your profession, I begin with what is called the Deistical Controversy, that is, with a view of the Evidences of Christianity, and of the various questions which have arisen in canvassing the branches of which they are composed.

I assume, as the ground-work of every religious system, these two great doctrines, that “God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that

seek him.”* When I say that I assume them, I do not mean that human reason unassisted by revelation was ever able to demonstrate these doctrines in a manner satisfactory to every understanding. But I mean that these doctrines are agreeable to the natural impressions of the human mind, and that any religious system which purifies them from the manifold errors with which they have been incorporated, corresponds, in that respect, to the clear deductions of enlightened reason.

It is not my province to enter into any detail upon the proofs of these two doctrines of natural religion; and I am afraid to engage in discussions which have been conducted with much erudition and metaphysical acuteness, lest I should be enticed to employ too large a portion of your time in reviewing them. Leaving you to avail yourself of the copious sources of information which writers upon this subject afford, I will not enumerate, far less attempt to appreciate the different modes of reasoning which have been adopted in proof of the being of God, and his moral government. But, having assumed these doctrines, I think it proper to give by way of introduction to my course, a short view of the manner in which it appears to me that they may be established as the ground-work of all religion.

When we say that there is a God, we mean that the universe is the work of an intelligent Being; that is, from the things which we behold, we infer the existence of what is not the object of our senses. To show that the inference is legitimate, we must be able to state the principles upon which it proceeds, or the steps of that process by which the mind advances from the contemplation of the objects with which it is conversant, to the conviction of the existence of their Creator. These principles are found in the constitution of the human mind, in sentiments and perceptions which are natural and ultimate, which are manifested by all men upon various occasions, and which are only followed to their proper conclusion when they conduct us to the knowledge of God. One of these sentiments and perceptions appears in the spirit of inquiry and investigation which universally prevails; another is invariably excited by the contemplation of order, beauty and design.

A spirit of inquiry and investigation has larger opportunities of exertion, it is better directed, and is applied to nobler objects with some than with others. But to a certain degree, it is common to all men, and traces of it are found amongst all ranks. Now you will observe, that this spirit of inquiry is an effort to discover the cause of what we behold. And it proceeds upon this natural perception, that every new event, every thing which we see coming into existence, every alteration in any being, is an effect. Without hesitation we conclude that it has been produced, and we are solicitous to discover the cause of it. We begin our inquiries with eagerness; we pursue them as far as we have light to carry us; and we do not rest satisfied till we arrive at something which renders farther inquiries unnecessary. This persevering spirit of inquiry which is daily exerted about trifles finds the noblest subject of exertion in the continual changes which we behold upon the appearance of the heavenly bodies, upon

* Hebrews xi. 6.

the state of the atmosphere, upon the surface of the earth, and in those hidden regions which the progress of art leads man to explore. To every attentive and intelligent observer these continual changes present the whole universe as an effect; and, in contemplating the succession of them, he is led, as by the hand of nature, through a chain of subordinate and dependent causes to that great original Cause from whom the universe derived its being, upon whose operation depend all the changes of which it is susceptible, and by whose uncontrolled agency all events are directed.

Even without forming any extensive observations upon the train of natural events, we are led by the same spirit of inquiry from considering our own species to the knowledge of our Creator. Every man knows that he had a beginning, and that he derived his being from a succession of creatures like himself. However far back he supposes this succession to be carried, it does not afford a satisfying account of the cause of his existence. By the same principle which directs him in every other research, he is still led to seek for some original Being, who has been produced by none, and is himself the Father of all. As every man knows that he came into existence, so he has the strongest reason to believe that the whole race to which he belongs had a beginning. A tradition has in all ages been preserved of the origin of the human race. Many nations have boasted of antiquity. None have pretended to eternity. All that their records contain beyond a certain period is fabulous or doubtful. In looking back upon the history of mankind, we find them increasing in numbers, acquiring a taste for the ornaments of life, and improving in the liberal arts and sciences; so that unless we adopt without proof and against all probability the supposition of successive deluges which drown in oblivion all the attainments of civilized nations, and spare only a few savage inhabitants to propagate the race, we find in the state of mankind all the marks of novelty which it must have borne, had it begun to be some few thousand years ago. But if the human race had a beginning, we unavoidably regard it as an effect of which we require some original cause; and to the same cause from which it derived existence we must also trace the qualities by which the race is distinguished. The Being who gave it existence must be capable of imparting to it these qualities, that is, must possess them in a much higher degree. "He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?"* Thus, from the intelligence of men, we necessarily infer that of their Creator; while the number of intelligent beings with whom we converse cannot fail to give us the noblest idea of that original primary intelligence from which theirs is derived.

While the spirit of inquiry which is natural to man thus leads us from the consciousness of our own existence to acknowledge the existence of one supreme intelligent Being, the Father of Spirits, we are conducted to the same conclusion by that other natural perception which I said is invariably excited by the contemplation of order, beauty, and design.

* Psalm xciv. 9, 10.

The grandeur and beauty of external objects do not seem to affect the other animals. But they afford a certain degree of pleasure to all men; and in many persons a taste for them is so far cultivated that the pleasures of imagination constitute a large source of refined enjoyment. When the grandeur and beauty are conjoined as they seldom fail to be with utility, they do not merely afford us pleasure. We not only perceive the objects which we behold, to be grand and beautiful and useful; but we perceive them to be effects produced by a designing cause. In viewing a complicated machine, it is the design which strikes us. In admiring the object, we admire the mind that formed it. Without hesitation we conclude that it had a former; and although ignorant of every other circumstance respecting him, we know this much, that he is possessed of intelligence, our idea of which rises in proportion to the design discovered in the construction of the machine. By this principle, which is prior to all reasoning, and of which we can give no other account than that it is part of the constitution of the human mind, we are raised from the admiration of natural objects to a knowledge of the existence, and a sense of the perfections of Him who made them.

When we contemplate the works of nature, distinguished from those of art by their superior elegance, splendour, and utility; when we behold the sun, the moon, and the stars, performing their offices with the most perfect regularity, and although removed at an immense distance from us, contributing in a high degree to our preservation and comfort; when we view this earth fitted as a convenient habitation for man, adorned with numberless beauties, and provided not only with a supply of our wants, but with every thing that can minister to our pleasure and entertainment; when, extending our observation to the various animals that inhabit this globe, we find that every creature has its proper food, its proper habitation, its proper happiness; that the meanest insect as well as the noblest animal has the several parts of its body, the senses bestowed upon it, and the degree of perfection in which it possesses them, adapted with the nicest proportion to its preservation and to the manner of life which by natural instinct it is led to pursue; when we thus discover within our own sphere, numberless traces of kind and wise design, and when we learn both by experience and by observation that the works of nature, the more they are investigated and known, appear the more clearly to be parts of one great consistent whole, we are necessarily led by the constitution of our mind to believe the being of a God. Our faith does not stand in the obscure reasonings of philosophers. We but open our eyes, and discerning, wheresoever we turn them, the traces of a wise Creator, we see and acknowledge his hand. The most superficial view is sufficient to impress our minds with a sense of his existence. The closest scrutiny, by enlarging our acquaintance with the innumerable final causes that are found in the works of God, strengthens this impression, and confirms our first conclusions. The more that we know of these works, we are the more sensible that in nature there is not only an exertion of power, but an adjustment of means to an end, which is what we call wisdom; and an adjustment of means to the end of distributing happiness to all the creatures, which is the highest conception that we can form of goodness.

A foundation so deeply laid in the constitution of the human mind for the belief of a Deity has produced an acknowledgment of his being, almost universal. The idea of God, found amongst all nations civilized in the smallest degree, is such that by the slightest use of our faculties we must acquire it. And accordingly the few nations who are said to have no notion of God are in a state so barbarous that they seem to have lost the perceptions and sentiments of men.

The Atheist allows it to be necessary that something should have existed of itself from eternity. But he is accustomed to maintain that matter in motion is sufficient to account for all those appearances from which we infer the being of God. The absurdities of this hypothesis have been ably exposed. He supposes that matter is self-existent, although it has marks of dependence and imperfection inconsistent with that attribute. He supposes that matter has from eternity been in motion, that is, that motion is an essential quality of matter, although we cannot conceive of motion as any other than an accidental property of matter, impressed by some cause, and determined in its direction by foreign impulses. He supposes that all the appearances of uniformity and design which surround him can proceed from irregular undirected movements. And he supposes lastly, that although there is not a plant which does not spring from its seed, nor an insect which is not propagated by its kind, yet matter in motion can produce life and intelligence, properties repugnant in the highest degree to all the known properties of matter.

I do not say that it is possible by reasoning to demonstrate that these suppositions are false; and I do not know that it is wise to make the attempt. The belief of the being of God rests upon a sure foundation, upon the foundation on which He himself has rested it, if all the suppositions by which some men have tried to set it aside contradict the natural perceptions of the human mind. These are the language in which God speaks to his creatures, a language which is heard through all the earth; and the words of which are understood to the end of the world. By listening to that language, we learn from the various yet uniform phenomena of nature, that there is a wise Creator: we are taught by the imperfection and dependence of the soul, that it owes its being to some original cause; and in its extensive faculties, its liberty, and power of self-motion, we discern that cause to be essentially different from matter. The voice of nature thus proclaims to the children of men the existence of one supreme intelligent Being, and calls them with reverence to adore the Father of their spirits.

The other great doctrine which I assume as the ground-work of every religious system, is thus expressed by the Apostle to the Hebrews: "God is a rewarder of them that seek Him;" in other words, the government of God is a moral government.

We are here confined to an inconsiderable spot in the creation, and we are permitted to behold but a small part of the operations of Providence. It becomes us therefore to proceed in our inquiries concerning the Divine Government with much humility: but it does not become us to desist. The character and the laws of that government under which we acknowledge that we live, are matters to us of the last importance; and it is our duty thankfully to avail ourselves of the light which we enjoy. The constitution of human nature and

the state of the world are the only two subjects within the sphere of our observations, from which unassisted reason can discover the character of the divine government.

When we attend to the constitution of human nature, the three following particulars occur as traces of a moral government.

1. The distribution of pleasure and pain in the mind of man is a moral distribution. Those affections and that conduct which we denominate virtuous are attended with immediate pleasure; the opposite affections and conduct with immediate pain. The man who acts under the influence of benevolence, gratitude, a regard to justice and truth, is in a state of enjoyment. The heart which is actuated by resentment or malice is a stranger to joy. Here is a striking fact of a very general kind, furnishing very numerous specimens of a moral government.

2. There is a faculty in the human mind which approves of virtue, and condemns vice. It is not enough to say that righteousness is prudent because it is attended with pleasure; that wickedness is foolish because it is attended with pain. Conscience, in judging of them, pronounces the one to be right, and the other to be wrong. The righteous, supported by that most delightful of all sentiments, the sense that he is doing his duty, proceeds with self-approbation, and reflects upon his conduct with complacency; the wicked not only is distracted by the conflict of various wretched passions, but acts under the perpetual conviction that he is doing what he ought not to do.—The hurry of business or the tumult of passion may, for a season, so far drown the voice of conscience, as to leave him at liberty to accomplish his purpose. But when his mind is cool, he perceives that in following blindly the impulse of appetite he has acted beneath the dignity of his reasonable nature; the indulgence of malevolent affections is punished by the sentiment of remorse; and he despises himself for every act of baseness.

3. Conscience, anticipating the future consequences of human actions, forebodes, that it shall be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked. The righteous, although naturally modest and unassuming, not only enjoys present serenity, but looks forward with good hope. The prospect of future ease lightens every burden, and the view of distant scenes of happiness and joy holds up his head in the time of adversity. But every crime is accompanied with a sense of deserved punishment. To the man who has disregarded the admonitions of conscience, she soon begins to utter her dreadful pre-sages; she lays open to his view the dismal scenes which lie beyond every unlawful pursuit; and sometimes awaking with increased fury, she produces horrors that constitute a degree of wretchedness, in comparison of which all the sufferings of life do not deserve to be mentioned. The constitution of human nature being the work of God, the three particulars which have been mentioned as parts of that constitution are parts of his government. The pleasure which accompanies one set of affections and the pain which accompanies the opposite afford an instance in the government of God of virtue being rewarded, and vice being punished:—the faculty which passes sentence upon human actions is a declaration from the Author of our nature of that conduct which is agreeable to Him, because it is a rule

directing his creatures to pursue a certain conduct :—and the presentiment of the future consequences of our behaviour is a declaration from the Author of our nature of the manner in which his government is to proceed with regard to us. The hopes and fears natural to the human mind are the language in which God foretells to man the events in which he is deeply interested. To suppose that the Almighty engages his creatures in a certain course of action by delusive hopes and fears, is at once absurd and impious; and if we think worthily of the Supreme Being, we cannot entertain a doubt that He, who by the constitution of human nature has declared his love of virtue and his hatred of vice, will at length appear the righteous Governor of the universe.

I mentioned the state of the world as another subject within the sphere of our observation, from which unassisted reason may discover the character of the government of God. And here also we may mark three traces of a moral government.

1. It occurs, in the first place, to consider the world as the situation in which creatures, having the constitution which has been described, are placed. Acting in the presence of men, that is, of creatures constituted as we ourselves are, and feeling a connection with them in all the occupations of life, we experience in the sentiments of those around us, a farther reward and punishment than that which arises from the sense of our own minds. The faculty which passes sentence upon a man's own actions, when carried forth to the actions of others becomes a principle of esteem or contempt. The sense of good or ill desert becomes, upon the review of the conduct of others, applause or indignation. When it referred to a man's own conduct, it pointed only at what was future. When it refers to the conduct of others it becomes an active principle, and proceeds in some measure to execute the rules which it pronounces to be just.

Hence the righteous is rewarded by the sentiments of his fellow-creatures. He experiences the gratitude of some, the friendship, at least the good-will of all. The wicked, on the other hand, is a stranger to esteem, and confidence, and love. His vices expose him to censure; his deceit renders him an object of distrust; his malice creates him enemies; according to the kind and the degree of his demerit, contempt or hatred or indignation is felt by every one who knows his character; and even when these sentiments do not lead others to do him harm, they weaken or extinguish the emotions of sympathy; so that his neighbours do not rejoice in his prosperity, and hardly weep over his misfortunes.

Thus does God employ the general sense of mankind to encourage and reward the righteous, to correct and punish the wicked; and thus has he constituted men in some sort the keepers of their brethren, the guardians of one another's virtue. The natural unperverted sentiments of the human mind with regard to character and conduct are upon the side of virtue and against vice; and the course of the world, turning in a great measure upon these sentiments, indicates a moral government.

2. A second trace in the state of the world, of the moral government of God, is the civil government by which society subsists.

Those who are employed in the administration of civil government are not supposed to act immediately from sentiment. It is expected that without regard to their own private emotions they shall in every case proceed according to certain known and established laws. But these laws, so far as they go, are in general consonant to the sentiment of the human mind, and, like them, are favourable to the cause of virtue. The happiness, the existence of human government depends upon the protection and encouragement which it affords to virtue, and the punishment which it inflicts upon vice. The government of men, therefore, in its best, and happiest form is a moral government; and being a part, an instrument of the government of God, it serves to intimate to us the rule according to which his Providence operates through the general system.

3. Setting aside all consideration of the instrumentality of man, there appear in the world evident traces of the moral government of God. Many of the consequences of men's behaviour happen without the intervention of any agent. Of this kind are the effects which their way of life has upon their health, and much of its influence upon their fortune and situation. Effects of the same nature extend to communities of men. They derive strength and stability from the truth, moderation, temperance and public spirit of the members; whereas idleness, luxury, and turbulence, while they ruin the private fortunes of many individuals, are hurtful to the community; and the general depravity of the members is the disease and weakness of the state.

These effects do not arise from any civil institution. They are not a part of the political regulations which are made with different degrees of wisdom in different states; but they may be observed in all countries. They are part of what we commonly call the course of nature; that is, they are rewards and punishments ordained by the Lord of nature, not affected by the caprice of his subjects, and flowing immediately from the conduct of men. There arises indeed, from the present situation of human affairs, many obstructions to the full operation of these rewards and punishments. Yet the degree in which they actually take place is sufficient to ascertain the character of the government of God. In those cases where we are able to trace the causes which prevent the exact distribution of good and evil, we perceive that the very hindrances are wisely adapted to a present state. Even where we do not discern the reasons of their existence, we clearly perceive that these hindrances are accidental; that virtue, benign and salutary in its influences, tends to produce happiness, pure and unmixed; that vice, in its nature mischievous, tends to confusion and misery; and we cannot avoid considering these tendencies as the voice of Him, who hath established the order of nature, declaring to those who observe and understand them, the future condition of the righteous and the wicked.

And thus in the world, we behold upon every hand of us openings of a kingdom of righteousness corresponding to what we formerly traced in the constitution of human nature. By that constitution, while reward is provided for virtue and punishment for vice, there arise in our breast the forebodings of a higher reward and a higher

punishment. So in the world, while there are manifold instances of a righteous distribution of good and evil, there is a tendency towards the completion of a scheme which is here but begun.

This view of the government of God, which we have collected from the constitution of human nature and the state of the world, is brought to light by the religion of Jesus Christ. The language of God in his works leads us to his word in the Gospel. All our disquisitions concerning the nature of his government only prepare us for receiving those gracious discoveries, which, confirming every conclusion of right reason, resolving every doubt, and enlarging the imperfect views which belong to this the beginning of our existence, bring us perfect assurance, that, in the course of the Divine government, unlimited in extent, in duration, and in power, every hindrance shall be removed, the natural consequences of action shall be allowed to operate, virtue shall be happy, and vice shall be miserable.

Abernethy on the Attributes.

Cudworth's Intellectual System; a magazine of learning, where all the different schemes of Atheism are combated with profound erudition and close argument.

Boyle's Lectures; a collection of the ablest defences of the great truths of religion that are to be found in any language. Having been composed in a long succession of years by men of different talents and pursuits, they furnish an abundant specimen of all the variety of argument that has ever been adduced upon the subject of which they treat.

Butler's Analogy, the first chapters of which should be particularly studied in relation to the subjects of this discourse.

Essays on Morality and Natural Religion, by Henry Home, Lord Kaimes.

Paley's Natural Theology, the last and perhaps the most elaborate work of this author.

He had here his pioneers as well as his forerunners. But his inimitable skill in arranging and condensing his matter, his peculiar turn for what may be called "animal mechanics," the aptness and the wit of his illustrations, and occasionally the warmth and the solemnity of his devotion, which, by a happy and becoming process, was rendered more animated as he drew nearer to the close of life, stamp on this work a character more valuable than originality.

CHAPTER I.

COLLATERAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY FROM HISTORY.

THE ground-work which I suppose to be laid in an inquiry into the truth of the Christian religion, is a belief of the two great doctrines of natural religion, that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek him. You consider a man as led by the principles of his nature to believe that the universe is the work of an intelligent Being, although wandering very much in his apprehensions of that Being: you consider him as feeling that the government of the Creator of the world is a righteous government, although conscious that he often transgresses the law of his Maker, and very uncertain as to the method in which the sanctions of that law are to operate with regard to him: and you propose to examine whether to man in these circumstances, there was given an extraordinary revelation by the preaching of the Son of God, or whether Jesus Christ and his apostles were men who spoke and wrote according to their own measure of knowledge, and who, when they called themselves the messengers of God, assumed a character which did not belong to them. It is manifest at first sight, that such a revelation is extremely desirable to man; and a closer investigation of the subject may show it to be desirable in such a degree, so necessary to the comfort and improvement of man, as to create a presumption in favour of the proofs that the Father of the human race has been pleased to grant it. But the necessity of revelation is a subject upon which, in my opinion, it is better not to enter at the outset; because, if the proofs of the truth of Christianity be defective, the presumption arising from this necessity will not be sufficient to help them out; and if they be clear and conclusive, the necessity of revelation will be more manifest after you proceed to examine its nature and its effects.

The truth of Christianity turns upon a question of fact; which, like every other question of the same kind, ought to be judged calmly and impartially—not by the wishes which it may be natural to form upon the subject, but by the evidence which is adduced in support of the fact. We allow the great body of the people to retain all the early prejudices which they happily acquire on the side of Christianity.—We allow its full weight to every consideration which is level to their capacity, and which corresponds to their habits; because, what we wish to impress upon them is a practical belief of the truth of religion: and this practical belief may be sufficient to direct their conduct and to establish their hope, although it be not grounded upon critical inquiries and logical deductions. But it is expected that the teachers of religion should be able to defend the citadel in which they are

placed, against the attack of every enemy, and that they should be acquainted with the quarters which are most likely to be attacked, with the nature of the blow that is to be aimed, and the most successful method of warding it off. With them, therefore, belief ought to be not merely the result of early habit, but a conviction founded upon a close examination of evidence ; and in this, as in every other inquiry, they ought to take the fair and safe method of arriving at the truth, by bringing to the search after it, a mind unembarrassed with any prepossession.

A person who, in this state of mind, begins to examine the question of fact upon which the deistical controversy turns, will be struck with that support which the truth of Christianity receives from the whole train of history for more than 1700 years. The impartial historians of those times, Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny, in passages* which have been often quoted and commented upon, and the exact amount of which every student of divinity ought to know, concur with Celsus, Porphyry, and Julian, the learned, inveterate, and inquisitive adversaries of the Christian faith, in establishing beyond the possibility of doubt the following leading facts ;—that Jesus Christ, in the reign of Tiberius, was put to death ; that this man during his life founded, and his followers after his death supported a sect, upon the reputation of performing miracles ; and that this sect spread quickly, and became very numerous in different parts of the Roman empire. A succession of Christian writers is extant, some of whom lived near enough the event to be witnesses of it, and all of whom published books, which must have appeared absurd to their contemporaries, if the facts upon which these books proceeded had then been known to be false. A chain of tradition can be shown by which the principal facts were transmitted in the Christian Church. The existence of our religion can be traced back to the time and place to which the beginning of it is referred ; and since that time, by the institution of a Gospel ministry, by the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and by the observance of the Lord's day, there have continued, in many parts of the world, standing memorials of the preaching, the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

I begin with mentioning these things, because every literary man will perceive the advantage of taking possession of this strong ground. By placing his foot here he is furnished with a kind of extrinsical evidence, the force of which none will deny, which cannot be said to create any unreasonable prepossession, and yet which prepares the mind for the less remote proofs of a Divine revelation.

Grotius de Veritate Rel. Chris.

Macknight on the Truth of the Gospel History.

Addison's Evidences.

Lardner's Credibility of the Gospel History.

* Sueton. Claud. cap. 25. Sueton. Nero. cap. 16. Tacit. Ann. l. xv. 44. Plin. l. x. ep. 97.

CHAPTER II.

AUTHENTICITY AND GENUINENESS OF THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THE whole of that revelation which is peculiar to Christians is contained in the books of the New Testament; and therefore, it appears to me that before we begin to judge of the divine mission or inspiration of the persons to whom these books are ascribed, we ought to satisfy ourselves that the books themselves are authentic and genuine. For even although the apostles of Jesus did really receive a commission from the Son of God, yet if the books which bear their names were not written by them, or if they have been corrupted as to their substance and import since they were written, that is, if the books are not both authentic and genuine, we may be very much misled by trusting to them, notwithstanding the divine mission of their supposed authors. I oppose the word authentic to suppositions; the word genuine to vitiated; I call a book authentic which was truly the work of the person whose name it bears; I call a book genuine which remains in all material points the same as when it proceeded from the author. Upon these two points, the authenticity and genuineness of the books of the New Testament, I am at present to fix your attention. Both the subjects open a wide field, and have received much discussion. All that I can do, is to mark to you the leading circumstances which have been discussed, and with regard to which it becomes you to inform and satisfy your minds.

1. The canon of the New Testament is the collection of books written by apostles, or by persons under their direction, and received by Christians as of divine authority. This canon was not formed by any General Council, who claimed a power of deciding in this matter for the Christian Church; but it continued to grow during all the age of the apostles, and it received frequent accessions, as the different books came to be generally recognised. It was many years after the ascension of Jesus before any of the books of the New Testament were written. The apostles were at first entirely occupied with the labours and perils which they encountered in executing their commission to preach the Gospel to all nations. They found neither leisure nor occasion to write, till Christian societies were formed; and all their writings were suggested by particular circumstances which occurred in the progress of Christianity. Some of the Epistles to the Churches were the earliest of their writings. Every Epistle was received upon unquestionable evidence by the Church to which it was sent, and in whose keeping the original manuscript remained. Copies were circulated first among the neighbouring churches, and went

from them to Christian societies at a greater distance, till, by degrees, the whole Christian world, considering the superscription of the Epistle, and the manner in which it came to them, as a token of its authenticity, and relying upon the original, which they knew where to find, gave entire credit to its being the work of him whose name it bore. This is the history of the thirteen Epistles which bear the name of the apostle Paul, and of the First Epistle of Peter. Some of the other Epistles, which had not the same particular superscription, were not so easily authenticated to the whole Church, and were, upon that account, longer of being admitted into the canon.

The Gospels were written by different persons, for different purposes; and those Christian societies upon whose account they were originally composed, communicated them to others. The book of Acts went along with the Gospel of Luke, as a second part composed by the same author. The four Gospels, the book of Acts, and the fourteen epistles which I mentioned, very early after their publication, were known and received by the followers of Jesus in every part of the world. References are made to them by the first Christian writers; and they have been handed down, by an uninterrupted tradition, from the days in which they appeared, to our time. Polycarp was the disciple of the Apostle John; Irenæus was the disciple of Polycarp; and of the works of Irenæus a great part is extant, in which he quotes most of the books of the New Testament, and mentions the number of the Gospels, and the names of many of the Epistles. Origen in the third century, Eusebius and Jerome in the fourth, give us, in their voluminous works, catalogues of the books of the New Testament which coincide with ours, relate fully the history of the authors of the several books, with the occasion upon which they wrote, and make large quotations from them. In the course of the first four centuries the greater part of the New Testament was transcribed in the writings of the Christians, and many particular passages were quoted and referred to by Celsus and Julian, in their attacks upon Christianity. From the beginning of the Church, throughout the whole Christian world, the books of the New Testament were publicly read and explained to the people in their assemblies for divine worship; and they were continually appealed to by Christian writers as the standard of faith, and the supreme judge in controversy. The Christian world was very far from being prone to receive every book which claimed inspiration. Although many were circulated under respectable names, none were ever admitted by the whole Church, or quoted by Christian writers as of divine authority, except those which we now receive. And it was very long before some of them were universally acknowledged. When you come to examine the subject particularly, you will find that we stand upon ground which we are fully able to defend, when we admit the Epistle to the Hebrews, the smaller Epistles, and the book of Revelation, as of equal authority with any other part of the New Testament. At the same time, the hesitation which, for several ages, was entertained in some places of the Christian world with regard to these books, is satisfying to a candid mind, because this hesitation is of itself a strong presumption, that the universal and cordial reception which was given to all the other books

of the New Testament, proceeded upon clear incontestable evidence of their authenticity.

If, then, we readily receive, upon the authority of tradition, the History of Thucydides, the Orations of Cicero, the Dialogues of Plato, as really the composition of these immortal authors, we have much more reason to give credit to the explicit testimony which the judgment of contemporaries, and the acknowledgment of succeeding ages, have borne to the writers of the New Testament. There is not any ancient book with regard to which the external evidence of authenticity is so full and so various : and this variety of external evidence is confirmed to every person who is capable of judging, by the most striking internal marks of authenticity,—by numberless instances of agreement with the history of those times, which are most satisfying when they appear to be most trivial, because they form altogether a continued coincidence in points where it could not well have been studied ; a coincidence which, the more that any one is versant in the manners, the geography, and the constitution of ancient times, will bring the more entire conviction to his mind, that these books must have been written by persons living in the very country, and at the very period to which we refer those who are accounted the authors of them. Undesigned coincidences between the Acts and the Epistles are pointed out with admirable taste and judgment in Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*, which is perhaps the most cogent and convincing specimen of moral argumentation in the world ; and in the first volume of his *Evidences of Christianity*,—which are professedly a compilation, but so condensed and compacted, so illuminated and enforced, that it is impossible not to admire the matchless powers of the compiler's genius in turning the patient drudgery of Lardner to such account,—the authenticity of the Gospel and Acts is established.

2. Having ascertained to your own satisfaction the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, you will next proceed to inquire whether they are genuine, that is, uncorrupted. For even although they proceed at first from the apostles or evangelists whose names they bear, they may have been so altered since that time as to convey to us very false information with regard to their original contents. It does not become you to rest in the presumption that the providence of God, if it gave a revelation, would certainly guard so precious a gift, and transmit entire through all ages “the faith once delivered to the saints.”* The analogy of nature does not support this presumption ; for the best blessings of heaven are abused by the vices or the negligence of those upon whom they are bestowed ; and succeeding generations often suffer in their domestic, political, and religious interests, by abuses of which their predecessors were guilty. It becomes a divine to know, that the manuscripts of the books of the New Testament, which were originally deposited with the Christian societies, no longer exist ; that there have been the same ignorance, haste, and inaccuracy in transcribing the Gospels and Epistles, as in transcribing all other books ; and that the various readings arising from these or other sources were very early observed. Origen speaks of them in the third century. They multiplied exceedingly, as was to be expected

* Jude v. 3.

from the nature of the thing, after his time, when the copies of the original MSS. became more numerous and more widely diffused; so that Mill, in his splendid and valuable edition of the Greek Testament, has numbered 30,000 various readings.

This has been a subject of much declamation and triumph to the enemies of our Christian faith. Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke, Collins, Toland, Tindal, and many other deistical writers in the beginning of the last century, boasted that Christians are not in possession of a sure standard; and they built upon the supposed corruption of the Greek text, an argument for the superiority of the light of nature above that uncertain instruction which varies continually as it passes through the hands of men. A scholar must be aware of this difficulty, and prepared to meet it.

When you come to estimate the amount of the 30,000 various readings, you will find that almost all of them are trifling changes upon letters and syllables, and that there is hardly one instance in which they affect the great doctrines of our religion. It will give you much satisfaction to observe, that the different sects into which the Christian church was early divided, watched one another; that any great alteration of a book which, soon after its being published, had been sent over the whole world, was impossible; that even those who corrupted Christianity have preserved the Scriptures so entire, as to transmit a full refutation of their own errors; and that from the most vitiated copies the one faith and hope of Christians may be learned. Still, however, it is desirable that these various readings should be corrected, and it is proper that you should have a general acquaintance with the sources from which the correction of them is to be derived. These sources are four. 1. The MSS. of the New Testament which abound in Germany, France, Italy, England, and other countries of Europe. I mean MSS. written long before printing was in use, some of which, particularly Codex Vaticanus and Codex Alexandrinus, are referred to one or other of the first three centuries of the Christian era. 2. The ancient versions of the New Testament, which having been made in early times from copies much nearer the original MSS. than any that we have, may be considered as in some degree vouchers of the contents of those MSS. The most respectable of the ancient versions is the old Italic, which, we have reason to believe, was made in the first century for the benefit of those Christians in the Roman empire who understood the Latin better than any other language. It has, indeed, undergone many alterations; but so far as it can be recovered in its most ancient form, it is the surest guide, in doubtful places, to that which was the original reading. 3. A third source of correction is found in the numberless quotations from the New Testament with which the works of the Christian fathers and other early writers abound. Had they always copied exactly from books lying before them, the extent of their quotations would have rendered them as certain guides to the genuine reading, as they are unquestionable witnesses of the authenticity. But it cannot be denied, that as the books of the New Testament were perfectly familiar to them, they have often quoted from memory, and that being more careful to give the sense than the words, they differ from one another in some trivial respects, when quoting the same passage, so

that their quotations cannot be applied indiscriminately to ascertain the original. 4. The last source of correction is sound chastised criticism, which, joining to the sagacious use of the most ancient MSS., versions, and quotations, cautious but skilful conjecture, determines which of the various readings is to be preferred, upon principles so clearly established, and so accurately applied as to leave no hesitation in the mind of any scholar. The canons of scripture criticism have been investigated and digested by many learned men. You will find collections of them in the *Prolegomena* to the larger editions of the Greek Testament. They are frequently applied by the later commentators, and they are the introduction to a kind of learning which, although it is apt, when prosecuted too far, to lead to what is minute and frivolous, yet is in many respects so essential that it does not become any one who professes to interpret the Scriptures to others to be entirely a stranger to it.

Superficial reasoners may think it strange that so much discussion should be necessary to ascertain the true reading of the oracles of God; and in their haste they may pronounce, that it would have been more becoming the great purpose for which these oracles were given, more kind, and more useful to man, that the originals should have been saved from destruction; and that if the great extent of the Christian society rendered it impossible for every one to have access to them, the all-ruling providence of God should have preserved every copy that was taken from every kind of vitiation. They who thus judge, forget that there is no part of the works of creation, of the ways of Providence, or of the dispensation of grace, in which the Almighty has done precisely that which we would have dictated to him, had he admitted us to be his counsellors, although we are generally able, by considering what he has done, to discover that his plan is more perfect, and more universally useful, than that which our narrow views might have suggested as best. They forget the extent of the miracle which they ask, when they demand, that all who ever were employed in copying the New Testament should at all times have been effectually guarded by the Spirit of God from negligence, and their works kept safe from the injuries of time. And they forget, in the last place, that the very circumstance to which they object has, in the wisdom of God, been highly favourable to the cause of truth. The infidel has enjoyed his triumph, and has exposed his ignorance. Men of erudition have been encouraged to apply their talents to a subject which opens so large a field for the exercise of them. Their research and their discoveries have demonstrated the futility of the objection; and have shown that the great body of the people in every country, who are incapable of such research, may safely rest in the Scriptures as they are; and that the most scrupulous critics, by the inexhaustible sources of correction which lie open to them, may attain nearer to an absolute certainty with regard to the true reading of the books of the New Testament, than of any other ancient book in any language. If they require more, their demand is unreasonable; for the religion of Jesus does not profess to satisfy the careless, or to overpower the obstinate, but rests its pretensions upon evidence sufficient to bring conviction to those who with honest hearts inquire after the truth, and are willing to exercise their reason in attempting to discover it.

Griesbach, professor at Jena in Saxony, published in 1796 the first volume of his second edition of the Greek Testament, containing the four Gospels; and in 1806, the second volume, containing the other books of the New Testament. He availed himself of the materials which sacred criticism had been collecting from the time of the publication of Mill's edition. And, adverting to all the manuscript quotations and versions which the research of a number of theological writers, in different parts of the world, had brought into view, he went farther than the former editors of the New Testament had done. They adhered to what is called the *textus receptus*, which had been established in the Elzevir edition of the Greek Testament in 1624, which is very much the same with that of the editions of Besa and Erasmus, and which is now in daily use. They only collected various readings from manuscripts, versions, and quotations, introduced them into a preface or notes, and explained in large and learned prolegomena, the degree of credit that was due to them; thus furnishing materials for a more correct edition of the Greek Testament, and unfolding the principles upon which these materials ought to be applied. But Griesbach proceeded himself to apply the materials, by introducing emendations into the text. This he is said, by Dr. Marsh, late Margaret Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, and now Bishop of Peterbro', to have done with unremitted diligence, with extreme caution, and with scrupulous integrity. His emendations never rest merely upon conjecture, but always upon authority which appeared to him decisive. They are printed in a smaller character than the rest of the text, or in some clear way distinguished from the received text; and when he was in any doubt, they are not introduced, but remain in the notes or margin. I have great satisfaction in saying, that in as far as I have examined Griesbach's New Testament, it does not appear to differ in any material respect from the received text; so that all the industry and erudition of this laborious and accurate editor serve to establish this most comfortable doctrine, that the books of the New Testament are genuine. Dr. Marsh says, that Griesbach's edition is so correct, and the prolegomena, or critical apparatus annexed to it, so full and learned, that there will be no occasion for a different edition of the Greek Testament during the life of the youngest of us. I quote Dr. Marsh, because in that portion of his lectures which has been published, he gives the most minute and ample information concerning all the editions of the Greek Testament. He mentions repeatedly, with due honour, Dr. Gerard's Institutes of Biblical Criticism, to which I refer you.

Marsh's Lectures, and his Translations of Michaelis's Introductions.

Macknight's Preliminary Discourses in his Commentary on the Epistles.

Lardner's Credibility of the Gospel History, and Supplement to it.

Leland.

Jortin.

Hartley in vol. 5th of Watson's Theological Tracts.

Prettyman's Institutes.

Paley's Horæ Paulinæ, and Evidences of Christianity.

CHAPTER III.

INTERNAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE leading characteristical assertion in the books of the New Testament is, that they contain a divine revelation. Jesus said, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me;"* and when he gave his apostles a commission to preach his gospel, he used these words, "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you."† "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth him that sent me."‡ This is the highest claim which any mortal can advance. It holds forth the man who makes it under the most dignified character; and, if it be well founded, it involves consequences the most interesting to those who hear him. Such a claim is not to be carelessly admitted. The grounds which it rests ought to be closely scrutinized; and reason cannot have a more important or honourable office than in trying its pretensions by a fair standard.

As every circumstance respecting those who advanced such a claim merits attention, the first thing which presents itself to a rational inquirer, is the manner in which the claim is made, and the state of mind which those who make it discover in their conduct, in the general style of their writings, or in particular expressions. Now, if you set yourselves to collect all the characters of enthusiasm, either from the writings of those profound moralists who have analyzed and discriminated the various features of the human mind, or from the behaviour of those who, in different ages, have mistaken the fancies of a distempered brain for the inspiration of heaven, you will find the most marked opposition between these characters and the appearance which the books of the New Testament present. Instead of the general indistinct, inconsistent ravings of enthusiasm, you find in these writings discourses full of sound sense and manly eloquence, connected reasonings, apposite illustrations, a multitude of particular facts, a continual reference to common life, and the same useful instructive views preserved throughout. Instead of the gloom of enthusiasm, you find a spirit of cheerfulness, a disposition to associate, an accommodation to prejudices and opinions. Instead of credulity and vehement passion, you observe in the writers of these books a slowness of heart to believe, a hesitation in the midst of evidence, perfect possession of their faculties, with calm serene manners. Instead of the self-conceit, the turgid insolent tone of enthusiasm, you find in them a reserve, a modesty, a simplicity of expression, a disparagement of their own peculiar gifts, and a constant endeavour to magnify, in the eyes of their followers, those virtues in which they themselves did

* John vii. 16.

† John xx. 21.

‡ Luke x. 16

not pretend to have any pre-eminence. The claim which they advance sits so easy and natural upon them, that the most critical eye cannot discern any trace of that kind of delusion which has often been exposed to public view; and they are so unlike any enthusiasts whom the world ever saw, that, as far as outward appearances are to be trusted, they “speak the words of truth and soberness.”*

But you will not trust to appearances. It becomes you to examine the words which they speak, and you are in possession of a standard by which these words should be tried, and without a conformity to which they cannot be received as divine. Reason and conscience are the primary revelation which God made to man. We know assuredly that they came from the author of nature, and our apprehensions of his perfections must indeed be very low, if we can suppose it possible that they should be contradicted by a subsequent revelation. If any system, therefore, which pretends to come from God, contain palpable absurdities, or if it enjoin actions repugnant to the moral feelings of our nature, it never can approve itself to our understandings. It is unnecessary to examine the evidences of its being divine, because no evidence can be so strong as our perception of the falsehood of that which is absurd, and of the inconsistency between the will of God and that which is immoral. When I say that a divine revelation cannot contain a palpable absurdity, I am far from meaning, that every thing contained in it must be plain and familiar, such as reason is already versant with. The revelation, in that case, would be unnecessary. Neither do I mean that every thing contained in it, although new, must be such as we are able fully to comprehend; for many insuperable difficulties occur in the study of nature. We have daily experience, that our ignorance of the manner in which a thing exists, does not create any doubt of its existence; and in the ordinary business of life, we admit without hesitation, the truth of facts which, at the time we admit them, are to us unaccountable. The presumption is, that if a revelation be given, it will contain more facts of the same kind; and it addresses you as reasonable creatures, if it require you, in judging of the facts which it proposes to your belief, to follow out the same principles upon which you are accustomed to proceed with regard to the facts which you see or hear. If the books of the New Testament be tried with this caution by the standard of reason, they will not be found to contain any of that contradiction which might entitle you to reject them before you examine their evidence. There are doctrines, to the full apprehension of which our limited faculties are inadequate; and there has been much perplexity and misapprehension in the presumptuous attempts to explain these doctrines. But the manner in which the books themselves state the doctrines, cannot appear to any philosophical mind to involve an absurdity. The system of religion and morality which they deliver is every way worthy of God. It corresponds to all the discoveries which the most enlightened reason has made with regard to the nature and the will of God; and it comprehends all the duties which are dictated by conscience or clearly suggested by the love of order. The few objections which have been made to the morality of the

* Acts xxvi. 25.

gospel, as being defective in some points, by not enjoining patriotism or friendship, or too rigorous in others, admit of so clear and so easy a solution, that nothing but the desire of finding fault, joined to the difficulty of discovering any exceptionable circumstance, could have drawn remarks so frivolous from the authors in whose works they appear.

You may, then, without much trouble, satisfy yourselves that neither the manner in which the writers of the New Testament advance their claim, nor the contents of their books, afford any reason for rejecting that claim instantly, without examining the evidence.—I do not say that this affords any proof of a divine revelation; for a system may be rational and moral without being divine. This is only a pre-requisite, which every person to whom a system is proposed under that character has a title to demand. But we state the matter very imperfectly when we say, that there is nothing in the manner or the contents of these books which deserves an immediate rejection. A closer attention to the subject not only renders it clear that they may come from God, but suggests many strong presumptions that they cannot be the work of men. These presumptions make up what is called the internal evidence of Christianity.

The *first* branch of this internal evidence is the manifest superiority of that system of religion and morality which is contained in the books of the New Testament, above any that was ever delivered to the world before. Here a Christian divine derives a most important advantage from an intimate acquaintance with the ancient heathen philosophers. He ought not to take upon trust the accounts of their discoveries which succeeding writers have copied from one another. But setting that which they taught, over against the discourses of Jesus Christ, and the writings of his Apostles, he ought to see with his own eyes the force of that argument which arises from the comparison. Do not think yourselves obliged to disparage the writings of the heathen moralists. The effort which they made to raise their minds above the grovelling superstition in which they were born was honourable to themselves; it was useful to their disciples, and it scattered some rays of light through the world. It does not become a scholar, who is daily reaping instruction and entertainment from their works, to deny them any part of that applause which is their due; and it is not necessary for a Christian. You may safely allow that they were very much superior in the knowledge of religion and morality to their countrymen; and yet, when you take those philosophers who lived before the Christian era, and compare their writings with the books of the New Testament, the disparity appears most striking. The views of God given in these books are not only more sublime than those which occasional passages in the writings of the philosophers discover, but are purified from the alloy which abounds in them, and are at once consistent with, and apposite to the condition of man. Religion is here uniformly applied to encourage man in the discharge of his duty, to support him under the trials of life, and to cherish every good affection. To love God with all our heart, and strength, and soul, and mind, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, the two commandments of the Gospel, are the most luminous and comprehensive principles of morality that ever were taught. The particular

precepts, which, although not systematically deduced, are but the unfolding of those principles, form the heart, regulate the conduct, descend into every relation, and constitute the most perfect and refined morality,—a morality, not elevated above the concerns or occasions of ordinary men, but sound and practical, which renders the members of society useful, agreeable, and respectable, and at the same time carries them forward by the progressive improvement of their nature to a higher state of being. The precepts themselves are short, expressive, and simple, easily retained, and easily applied; and they are enforced by all those motives which have the greatest power over the human mind. That future life, to which good men in every age had looked forward with an anxious wish, is brought to light in these books. There is not in them the conjecture, the hesitation, the embarrassment which had entered into the language of the wisest philosophers upon this subject. But there is an explicit declaration, delivered in a tone of authority which becomes that Being who can order the condition of his creatures, that this is a season of trial, that there will hereafter be a time of recompense, and that the conduct of men upon earth is to produce everlasting consequences with regard to their future condition. To the fears, of which a being who is conscious of repeated transgressions cannot divest himself, no other system had applied any remedy but the repetition of unavailing sacrifices. These books alone disclose a scheme of Providence adapted to the condition of sinners, announced, introduced and conducted with a solemnity corresponding to its importance, admirably fitted in all its parts, supposing it to be true, to revive the hopes of the penitent, to restore the dignity, the purity, and happiness of the intelligent creation, and thus to repair that degeneracy which all writers have lamented, of which every man has experience, and to the cure of which all human means had proved inadequate. This grand idea, which is characteristical of the books of the New Testament, completes their superiority above every other system, and gives a peculiar kind of sublimity to both the religion and the morality of the Gospel.

The *second* branch of the internal evidence of Christianity arises from the condition of those men in whose writings this superior system appears. We can trace a progress in ancient philosophy; we see the principles of science arising out of the occupation of men, collected, improved, abused; and we can mark the effect which both the improvement and the abuse had in producing that degree of perfection which they attained. To every person versant in the history of ancient philosophy, Socrates must appear an extraordinary man.—Yet the eminence of Socrates forms only a stage in the progress of his countrymen. His disciples, who have recorded his discourses, were men placed in a most favourable situation for polishing and enlarging their minds; and the Roman philosophers trod in their steps. But, if the books of the New Testament be authentic, the writers who have delivered to us this superior system, were men born in a mean condition, without any advantages of education, and with strong national prejudices, which the low habits formed by their occupations could not fail to strengthen. They have interwoven in their works their history and their manner of thinking. The obscurity of their station is vouched by contemporary writers, and it was one of the

reproaches thrown upon the Gospel by its earliest adversaries. Yet the conceptions of these mean men upon the most important subjects, far transcend the continued efforts of ancient philosophy; and the sages of Greece and Rome appear as children when compared with the fishermen of Galilee. From men, whose minds we cannot suppose to have been seasoned with any other notions of divine things than those which they derived from the teaching of the Pharisees, who had obscured the law by their traditions, and loaded it with ceremonies, there arose a pure and spiritual religion. From men, educated in the narrowness and bigotry of the Jewish spirit, there arose a religion which enjoins universal benevolence, a scheme for diffusing the knowledge of the true God over the whole earth, and forming a church out of all the nations under heaven. The divine plan of blessing the human race, in turning them from their iniquity, originated from a little district,—was adopted, not by the whole tribe as a method of retrieving their ancient honours, but by a few individuals, in opposition to public authority,—and was prosecuted with zeal and activity under every disadvantage and discouragement. When his contemporaries heard Jesus speak, they said, “Whence hath this man wisdom? How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?”* When the Jewish council heard Peter and John, they marvelled, because they knew that they were ignorant and unlearned men;† and to every candid inquirer, the superiority of that system, and the magnificence of that plan contained in the books of the New Testament, when compared with the natural opportunities of those from whom they proceed, must appear the most inexplicable phenomenon in the history of the human mind, unless we admit the truth of their claim.

A *third* branch of the internal evidence of Christianity arises from the character of Jesus Christ. It is often said with much truth, that the gospel has the peculiar excellence of proposing in the character of its author, an example of all its precepts. That character may also be stated as one branch of the internal evidence of Christianity, whether you consider Jesus as a teacher, or as a man. His manner of teaching was most dignified and most winning. “Never man spake like this man.” He taught by parable, by action, and by plain discourse. Out of familiar scenes, out of the objects which surrounded him, and the intercourse of social life, he extracted the most pleasing and useful instruction. He repelled the attacks of his enemies with a gentleness which disarmed, and a wisdom which confounded their malice. There was a plainness, yet a depth in all his sayings. He was tender, persuasive, or severe, according to circumstances; and the discourse, which seemed to have been dictated to him merely by the occasion, is found to convey lasting and valuable counsel to posterity. His character as a man, is allowed to be the most perfect which the world ever saw. All the virtues of which we can form a conception, were united in him with a more exact harmony, and shone with a lustre more bright and more natural, than in any of the sons of men. His descending from the glories of heaven, assuming the weakness of human nature, and voluntarily submitting to all the calamities

* Matt. xiii. 54. John vii. 15.

† Acts iv. 13

which he endured for the sake of men, exhibits a degree of benevolence, of magnanimity, and patience, which far exceeds the conception that Plato formed of the most tried and perfect virtue. The majesty of his divine nature is blended with the fellow feeling and condescension implied in his office ; and although the history of mankind did not afford any model that could here be followed, this singular character is supported throughout, and there is not any one of the words or actions ascribed to him, which does not appear to the most correct taste to become the man Christ Jesus. It is not possible that a manner of teaching, so infinitely superior to that of the Scribes and Pharisees, or that a character so extraordinary, so godlike, so consistent, could have been invented by the fishermen of Galilee. Admit only that the books of the New Testament are authentic, and you must allow that the authors of them drew Jesus Christ from the life. And how do they draw him? Not in the language of fiction, with sworn panegyric, with a laborious effort to number his deeds, and to record all his sayings, but in the most natural artless manner. Four of his disciples, not many years after his death, when every circumstance could easily be investigated, write a short history of his life. Without attempting to exhaust the subject, without studying to coincide with one another, without directing your attention to the shining parts of his history, or marking any contrast between him and other men, they leave you, from a few facts, to gather the character of the man whom they had followed. Thus you learn his innocence not from their protestations, but from the whole complexion of his life ; from the declaration of the judge who condemned him ; of the centurion who attended his execution ; of a traitor, who having been admitted into his family, was a witness of his most retired actions, who had no tie of affection, of delicacy, or consistency, to restrain him from divulging the whole truth, and who might have pleaded the secret wickedness of his master as an apology for his own baseness, who would have been amply repaid for his information, and yet who died with these words in his mouth, "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood."* Had Judas borne no such testimony, an appeal to him was the most unsafe method in which the writers of this history could attest the innocence of their master. But if the wisdom of God had ordained, that even in the family of Jesus the wrath of his enemies should thus praise him, it was the most natural for one of the evangelists to record so striking a circumstance : and I mention it here, only as a specimen of the manner in which the character of Jesus is drawn, not by the colouring of a skilful pencil, but by a continual reference to facts, which to impostors are of difficult invention, and of easy detection, but which, to those who exhibit a real character, are the most natural, the most delightful, and the most effectual method of making their friend known. "Shall we say," writes Rousseau, no uniform champion for the cause of Christianity, "shall we say that the history of the gospel is invented at pleasure? No. It is not thus that men invent. It would be more inconceivable that a number of men had in concert produced this book from their own imaginations, than it is that one man has furnished the subject

* Matt. xxvii. 4.

of it. The morality of the gospel, and its general tone, were beyond the conception of Jewish authors ; and the history of Jesus Christ has marks of truth so palpable, so striking, and so perfectly inimitable, that its inventor would excite our admiration more than its hero.*

A *fourth* branch of the internal evidence of Christianity arises from the characters of the apostles of Jesus as drawn in their own writings. Their condition renders the superiority of their doctrine inexplicable, without admitting a divine revelation : their character gives the highest credibility to their pretensions. We seldom read the work of any person, without forming some apprehension of his character ; and if his work represent him as engaged in a succession of trials, pouring forth the sentiments of his heart, and holding, in interesting situations, much intercourse with his fellow creatures, we contract an intimate acquaintance with him before we are done, and we are able to collect from numberless circumstances, whether he be at pains to disguise himself from us, or whether he be really such a man as he wishes to appear. No scene ever was more interesting to the actors, than that in which the writings of the apostles of Jesus exhibit them ; and the gospels and epistles taken together, afford to every attentive reader a complete display of their character. We said, that they appear from their writings devoid of enthusiasm, cool and collected. Yet this coolness is removed at the greatest distance from every mark of imposture. They are at no pains to disguise their infirmities ; all their prejudices shine through their narration ; and they do not assume to themselves any merit for having abandoned them. We see light opening slowly upon their minds, their hopes disappointed, and themselves conducted into scenes very different from those which they had figured. “ We trusted,” said they, after the death of their master, “ that it was he which should have redeemed Israel.”† Yet it is not long before they become firm, and cheerful, and resolute. Not overawed by the threatenings of the magistrates, nor shaken by the persecutions which they endured from their countrymen, they devoted their lives to the generous undertaking of spreading through the world the knowledge of that religion which they had embraced. Appearing as the servants of another, they disclaim the honours which their followers were disposed to pay them ; they uniformly inculcate quiet inoffensive manners, and a submission to civil authority ; and labouring with their hands for the supply of their necessities, they stand forth as patterns of humility and self-denial. The churches to which they write, are the witnesses to posterity of their holy unblameable conduct ; their sincerity and zeal breathe through all their epistles : and, when you read their writings, you behold the most illustrious example of disinterested beneficence, that exalted love of mankind, which made them forego every private consideration, in order to promote the virtue and happiness of those to whom they were sent. They had differences amongst themselves, which they are at no pains to conceal ; yet they remained united in the same cause. They had personal enemies in the churches which they planted ; yet they were not afraid to reprove, to censure, to excommunicate ; and, in the immediate prospect of death, they continued their labour of love.

* Rousseau, *Emile*, ii. 98.

† Luke xxiv. 21.

Such is the character of the apostles of Jesus, as it appears in their authentic writings, not drawn by themselves, but collected from the facts which they relate, and the letters which they address to those who knew them. It is a character so far raised above the ordinary exertions of mortals, and so diametrically opposite to the Jewish spirit, that we naturally search for some divine cause of its being formed. We are led to consider its existence as a pledge of the truth of that high claim which such men appear not unworthy to make; and this assurance of their veracity which we derive from their conduct, disposes our minds to attend to that external evidence which they offer to adduce.

I have thus stated what appear to me the principal parts of the internal evidence of Christianity. I have not mentioned the style or composition of the books of the New Testament, because, although I am of opinion that there are in them instances of sublimity, of tenderness, and of manly eloquence, which are not to be equalled by any human composition, and although the mixture of dignity and simplicity which characterizes these books is most worthy of the author and the subject of them, yet this is a matter of taste, a kind of sentimental proof which will not reach the understandings of all, and where an affirmation may be answered by a denial. The only evidence which Mahomet adduced for his divine mission, was the inimitable excellence of his Koran. Produce me, said he, a single chapter equal to this book, and I renounce my claim. We are not driven to this necessity; and therefore, although every person of true taste reads with the highest admiration many parts of the New Testament, although every divine ought to cultivate a taste for the sacred classics, and has often occasion to illustrate their beauties, it is better to rest the evidence of our religion upon arguments less controvertible.—Neither have I mentioned that inward conviction which the excellence of the matter, the grace of the promises, and the awfulness of the threatenings, produce on every mind disposed by the influence of heaven to receive the truth. This is the witness of the Spirit, the highest and most satisfying evidence of divine revelation; the gift of God, for which we pray, and which every one who asks with a good and honest heart is encouraged to expect. But this witness within ourselves, although it removes every shadow of doubt from our own breasts, cannot be stated to others. They are to be convinced, not by our feelings but by their own; and the truth of that fact, upon which the Deistical controversy turns, must be established by arguments which every understanding may apprehend, and with regard to which the experience of one man cannot be opposed to the experience of another. Of this kind are the points which I have stated; the superior excellence of that system contained in the books of the New Testament, taken in conjunction with the condition of those whom we know to be the authors of them, the character of Jesus Christ, as drawn by his disciples, and their own character as it appears from their writings. I do not say that these arguments will have equal force with all; but I say that they are fitted by their nature to make an impression upon every understanding which considers them with attention and candour. I allow that they form only a presumptive evidence for the high claim advanced in these books; and I consider

the external evidence of Christianity as absolutely necessary to establish our faith. But I have called your attention particularly to the various branches of this internal evidence, not only because the result of the four taken together appears to me to form a very strong presumption, but also because they constitute a principal part of the study of a divine. By dwelling upon these branches—by reading with care the many excellent books which treat of them,—and, above all, by searching the Scriptures with a special view to perceive the force of this internal evidence, your sense of the excellence of Christianity is confirmed; your hearts are made better, and you acquire the most useful furniture for those public ministrations in which it will be more your business to confirm them that believe, than to convince the gainsayers. The several points which I have stated perpetually recur in our discourses to the people; our lectures and our sermons are full of them; and therefore, the more extensive and various our information is with regard to these points, and the deeper the impression which the frequent contemplation of them has made upon our own minds, we are the better able to magnify, in the eyes of those for whose sakes we labour, the unsearchable riches of the Gospel, and to build them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.

Newcomb on the Character of our Saviour.

Leechman's Sermons.

Conybeare's Answer to Tindal.

Leland on the Advantages of the Christian Revelation.

Leland's View of the Deistical Writers.

Duchal's Sermons.

Jenyns on the Internal Evidences of Christianity.

Macknight on the Truth of the Gospel History.

Paley's Evidences of Christianity, Vol. II.

Bishop Porteus' Summary of the Evidences of Christianity.

CHAPTER IV.

DIRECT OR EXTERNAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

HAVING satisfied your minds that the books of the New Testament are authentic and genuine, that they contain nothing upon account of which they deserve immediately to be rejected, and that their contents afford a very strong presumption of their being what they profess to be, a revelation from God to man, it is natural next to inquire what is the direct evidence in support of this presumption; for, in a matter of such infinite importance, it is not desirable to rest entirely upon presumptions: and it is not to be supposed that the strongest evidence which the nature of the case admits will be withheld. The Gospel professes to offer such evidence; and our Lord distinguishes most accurately between the amount of that presumptive evidence which arises from the excellence of Christianity, and the force of that direct proof which he brought. Of the presumptive evidence he thus speaks: "If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."* *i. e.* Every man of an honest mind will infer from the nature of my doctrine, that it is of Divine origin. But of the direct proof he says: "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin. But now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father." "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not: But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works."† To the direct proof he constantly appeals: "The works which the Father hath given me to do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."‡ He declares, that the same works which he did, and greater than them, should his servants do:§ And what these works are, we learn from his answer to the disciples of John the Baptist, who brought to him this question, "Art thou he that should come?" "Go," said he, "and show John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised."|| The Gospel then professes to be received as a divine revelation upon the footing of miracles; and, therefore, every person who examines into the truth of our religion, ought to have a clear apprehension of the nature of that claim.

That I may not pass hurriedly over so important a subject, I have been led to divide my discourse upon miracles into three parts: in the first of which I shall state the force of that argument for the truth of Christianity which arises from the miracles of Jesus recorded in the New Testament.

* John vii. 17.

† John xv. 24; x. 37, 38.

‡ John v. 36.

§ John xiv. 12.

|| Matt. xi. 4, 5.

SECTION I.

ALL that we know of the Almighty is gathered from his works. He speaks to us by the effects which he produces ; and the signatures of power, wisdom, and goodness, which appear in the objects around us, are the language in which God teaches man the knowledge of himself. From these objects we learn the providence as well as the existence of God ; because, while the objects are in themselves great and stupendous, many of them appear to us in motion, and through the whole of nature, we observe operations which indicate not only the original exertions, but also the continued agency of a supreme invisible power. These operations are not desultory. By experience and information we are able to trace a certain regular course, according to which the Almighty exercises his power throughout the universe ; and all the business of life proceeds upon the supposition of the uniformity of his operations. We are often, indeed, reminded that our experience and information are very limited. Extraordinary appearances at particular seasons astonish the nations of the earth : new powers of nature unfold themselves in the progress of our discoveries ; and the accumulation of facts collected and arranged by successive generations, serves to enlarge our conceptions of the greatness and the order of that system to which we belong. But although we do not pretend to be acquainted with the whole course of nature, yet the more that we know, we are the more confirmed in the belief that there is an established course : and every true philosopher is encouraged by the fruit of his own researches to entertain the hope, that some future age will be able to reconcile with that course, appearances which his ignorance is at present unable to explain.

Although the business of life and the speculations of philosophy proceed upon the uniformity of the course of nature, yet it cannot be understood by those who believe in the existence of a Supreme Intelligent Being, that this uniformity excludes his interposition whenever he sees meet to interpose. We use the phrase, laws of nature, to express the method in which, according to our observation, the Almighty usually operates. We call them laws, because they are independent of us, because they serve to account for the most discordant phenomena, and because the knowledge of them gives us a certain command over nature. But it would be an abuse of language to infer from their being called laws of nature, that they bind him who established them. It would be recurring to the principles of atheism, to fate, and blind necessity, to say that the author of nature is obliged to act in the manner in which he usually acts ; and that he cannot, in any given circumstances, depart from the course which we observe. The departure, indeed, is to us a novelty. We have no principles by which we can foresee its approach, or form any conjecture with regard to the measure and the end of it. But if we conceive worthily of the Ruler of the universe, we shall believe that all these departures entered into the great plan which he formed in the beginning ; that they were ordained and arranged by him ; and that they arise at the time which he appointed, and fulfil the purposes of his wisdom.

There is not then any mutability or weakness in those occasional interpositions which seem to us to suspend the laws and to alter the course of nature. The Almighty Being, who called the universe out of nothing, whose creating hand gave a beginning to the course of nature, and whose will must be independent of that which he himself produced, acts for wise ends, and at particular seasons, not in that manner which he has enabled us to trace, but in another manner concerning which he has not furnished us with the means of forming any expectation, and which is resolvable merely into his good pleasure. The one manner is his ordinary administration, under which his reasonable offspring enjoy security, advance in the knowledge of nature, and receive much instruction: the other manner is his extraordinary administration, which, although foreseen by him as a part of the scheme of his government, appears strange to his intelligent creatures, but which, by this strangeness, may promote purposes, to them most important and salutary. It may rouse their attention to the natural proofs of the being and perfections of God; it may afford a practical confutation of the scepticism and materialism to which false philosophy often leads; and, rebuking the pride and the security of man, may teach the nations to know that the Lord God reigneth "in heaven and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places."*

To such moral purposes as these, any alteration of the course of nature, by the immediate interposition of the Almighty, may be subservient; and no man will presume to say that our limited faculties can assign all the reasons which may induce the Almighty thus to interpose. But we can clearly discern one most important end which may be promoted by those alterations of the course of nature, in which the agency of men, or other visible ministers of the divine power, is employed.

The circumstances of the intelligent creation may render it highly expedient that, in addition to that original revelation of the nature and the will of God which they enjoy by the light of reason, there should be superadded an extraordinary revelation, to remove the errors which had obscured their knowledge, to enforce the practice of their duty, or to revive and extend their hopes. The wisest ancient philosophers wished for a divine revelation; and to any one who examines the state of the old heathen world in respect of religion and morality, it cannot appear unworthy of the Father of his creatures to bestow such a blessing. This revelation, supposing it to be given, may either be imparted to every individual mind, or be confined to a few chosen persons, vested with a commission to communicate the benefits of it to the rest of the world. It is certainly possible for the Father of spirits to act upon every individual mind so as to give that mind the impression of an extraordinary revelation: it is as easy for the Father of spirits to do this, as to act upon a few minds. But, in this case, departures from the established course of nature would be multiplied without end. In the illumination of every individual, there would be an immediate extraordinary interposition of the Almighty. But extraordinary interpositions so frequent would lose their nature, so as to be confounded with the ordinary light of reason

* Psalm cxxxv. 6.

and conscience: or if they were so striking as to be, in every case, clearly discriminated, they would subdue the understanding, and overawe the whole soul, so as to extort, by the feeling of the immediate presence of the Creator, that submission and obedience which it is the character of a rational agent to yield with deliberation and from choice. It appears, therefore, more consistent with the simplicity of nature, and with the character of man, that a few persons should be ordained the instruments of conveying a divine revelation to their fellow-creatures; and that the extraordinary circumstances which must attend the giving such a revelation should be confined to them. But it is not enough that these persons feel the impression of a divine revelation upon their own minds: it is not enough that, in their communications with their fellow-creatures, they appear to be possessed of superior knowledge, and more enlarged views: it is possible that their knowledge and views may have been derived from some natural source; and we require a clear indisputable mark to authenticate the singular and important commission which they profess to bear. It were presumptuous in us to say what are the marks of such a commission which the Almighty can give; for our knowledge of what He can do, is chiefly derived from our observation of what He has done. But we may say, that, according to our experience of the divine procedure, there can be no mark of a divine commission more striking and more incontrovertible, than that the persons who bear it should have the privilege of altering the course of nature by a word of their mouths. The revelation made to their minds is invisible; and all the outward appearances of it may be delusive. But extraordinary works, beyond the power of man, performed by them, are a sensible outward sign of a power which can be derived from God alone. If he has invested them with this power, it is not incredible that he has made a revelation to their minds; and if they constantly appeal to the works, which are the signs of the power, as the evidence of the invisible revelation, and of the commission with which it was accompanied, then we must either believe that they have such a commission, or we are driven to the horrid supposition that God is the author of a falsehood, and conspires with these men to deceive his creatures.

When I call the extraordinary works performed by these men, the sign of a power derived from God, you recollect that all the language which we interpret consists of signs; *i. e.* objects and operations which fall under our senses, employed to indicate that which is unseen. What are the looks, the words, and the actions of our fellow creatures, but signs of that internal disposition which is hidden from our view? What are the appearances which bodies exhibit to our senses, but signs of the inward qualities which produce these appearances? What are the works of nature, but signs of that supreme intelligence. “whom no man hath seen at any time?”* Upon this principle, all those events and operations, beyond the compass of human power, which happen according to the established course of nature, form part of the foundations of Natural Religion; and any person who foretells or conducts them, only discovers his acquaintance with that course, and his sagacity in applying what we call the laws of nature. Upon

* John i. 18.

the same principle, all those events and operations which happen in opposition to the established course of nature, imply an exertion of the same power which established that course, because they counteract it; and any person who, by a word, produces such events and operations, discovers that this power is committed to him. To command the sun to run his race until the time of his going down, and to command him to stand still about a whole day, as in the valley of Gibeon in the time of Joshua,* are two commands which destroy one another; and therefore, if we believe that the will of the Almighty Ruler of the universe produces an uniform obedience to the first, we must believe that the obedience which, upon one occasion, was yielded to the second, was the effect of his will also. As no creature can stop the working of his hand, every interruption in that course according to which he usually operates, happens by his permission; and the power of altering the course of nature, by whomsoever it be exerted, must be derived from the Lord of nature.

This is the reasoning upon which we proceed, when we argue for the truth of a revelation, from extraordinary works performed by those through whom it is communicated; and here we see the important purpose which the Almighty promotes by employing the agency of men to change the order of nature. Those changes which proceed immediately from his hand, however well fitted to impress his creatures with a sense of his sovereignty, do not of themselves prove any new proposition, because their connexion with that proposition is not manifest. But, when visible agents perform works beyond the power of man, and contrary to the course of nature, they give a sign of the interposition of the Almighty, which, being applied by their declaration to the doctrine which they teach, becomes a voucher of the truth of what they say. To works of this kind, the term *miracles* is properly applied; and they form what has been called the seal of heaven, implying that delegation of the sovereign authority of the Lord of all, which appears to be reserved in the conduct of providence as the credential of those to whom a divine commission is at any time granted. This was the rod put into the hand of Moses, wherewith to do signs and wonders, that Pharaoh and the children of Israel might believe that the Lord God had sent him. This was the sign given to Elijah, that it might be known that he was a man of God; and this was the witness which the Father bore to "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God by miracles, which God did by him in the midst of the people,"† and to the apostles of Jesus who went forth to preach the Gospel, "the Lord working with them, and confirming the words by signs following."‡

The nature of the revelation contained in the books of the New Testament affords a very strong presumptive proof that it comes from God; whilst the works done by Jesus and his Apostles are the direct proof; and the two proofs conspire with the most perfect harmony. The presumptive proof explains the importance and the dignity of that occasion upon which the Almighty was pleased to make the interposition, of which these works are the sign: The direct proof accounts for that transcendent excellence, in the doctrine and the character of

* Joshua x. 12—14.

† Acts ii. 22.

‡ Mark xvi. 20

the author of this system, which, upon the supposition of its being of human origin, appeared to be inexplicable; and thus the internal and external evidence of Christianity, by the aid which they lend to one another, make us "ready to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us."*

We have found, that the reasoning involved in the argument from miracles, proceeds upon the same principles by which a sound theist infers the being and perfections of God; in both cases, we discover God by his works, which are to us the signs of his agency. This analogy between the proofs of natural and revealed religion is very much illustrated by considering the particular miracles recorded in the Gospel. When we investigate the evidences of natural religion, we find that any works manifestly exceeding human power would lead us, in the course of fair reasoning, to a Being antecedent to the human race, superior to them in strength, and independent of them in the mode of his existence. But it is the transcendent grandeur of these works which we behold, their inimitable beauty, their endless variety, their harmony, and utility; it is this infinite superiority of the works of nature above the works of art, which renders the argument completely satisfying, and leaves no doubt in our minds, either of the power or of the moral character of that Being from whom they proceed. In like manner, although, in stating the argument from miracles in support of the Gospel, we have reasoned fairly upon this simple principle, that they are interruptions of the course of nature, yet, when we come to consider those particular interruptions upon which the Gospel founds its claim, we perceive that their nature furnishes a very strong confirmation of the general argument, and that, like the other works of God, they proclaim their Author.

In Him who ruled the raging of the sea and stilled the tempest, we recognise the Lord of the universe. In that command which gave life to the dead, we recognise the author of life. In the works of Him who, by a word of his mouth, cured the most inveterate diseases, unstopped the ears which had never admitted a sound, opened the eyes which had never seen the light, conferred upon the most distracted mind the exercise of reason, and restored the withered, maimed, distorted limb, we recognise the Former of our bodies and the Father of our spirits. This is the very power by which all things consist, the energy of Him "in whom we live, and move, and have our being."† The miracles of the Gospel were performed without preparation or concert; they were instantaneous in the manner of being produced, yet their effects were permanent; and, like the works of nature, although they came without effort from the hands of the workman, they bore to be examined by the nicest eye. There does not appear in them that poverty which marks all human exertions; neither the strength nor the skill of Him who did them seemed to be exhausted; but there was a fulness of power, a multiplicity, a diversity, a readiness in the exercise of it, by which they resemble the riches of God that replenish the earth. Yet they were free from parade and ostentation. There were no attempts to dazzle, no anxiety to set off every work to the best advantage, no waste of exertion,

* 1 Peter iii. 15.

† Acts xviii. 28.

no frivolous accompaniments ; but a sobriety, a decorum, all the dignified simplicity of nature. The extraordinary power which appeared in the miracles of the gospel was employed not to hurt or to terrify, but to heal, to comfort, and to bless. The gracious purpose to which they ministered declared their divine origin ; and they who beheld a man who had the command of nature, and “who went about doing good,”* dispensing with a bountiful hand the gifts of heaven, lightening the burdens of human life, and accompanying every exercise of his power with a display of tenderness, condescension, and love, were taught to venerate the messenger, and the “express image” of that Almighty Lord whose kingdom excels at once in majesty and in grace.

As the religion which these miracles were wrought to attest, is in every respect worthy of God, so they were selected with divine wisdom to illustrate the peculiar doctrines of that religion ; and in the admirable fitness with which the nature of the proof is accommodated to the nature of the thing to be proved, we have an instance of the same kind with many which the creation affords of the perfection of the divine workmanship. Jesus came preaching forgiveness of sins ; and he brought with him a sensible sign of his having received a commission to bestow this invisible gift. Disease was introduced into the world by sin. Jesus therefore cured all manner of disease that we might know that he had power to forgive sins also. His being able to remove, not by the slow uncertain applications of human art, but instantly by a word of his mouth spoken at any distance, those temporal maladies which are the present visible fruits of sin, was an assurance to the world of his being able to remove the spiritual evils which flow from the same source. It was a specimen, a symbolical representation of his character as physician of souls. Jesus was that seed of the woman who was to bruise the head of the serpent, and he gave in his miracles a sensible sign of the fall of Satan. The influence which this adversary of mankind in every age exercises over the minds of men, was in that age connected with a degree of power over their bodies. It was the general belief in Judea, that certain diseases proceeded from the possession which his emissaries took of the human body. To the Jews therefore, the casting out devils was an ocular demonstration that Jesus was able to destroy the works of the devil. It was the beginning of the triumphs of this mighty prince, a trophy which he brought from the land of the enemy, to assure his followers of a complete victory. I have bound the strong man. Do you ask a proof? See, I enter his house and spoil his goods. I set free the mind and conscience which he had enslaved. My people will feel their freedom and will need no foreign proof. But does the world require one? See, by the finger of God, I set free those bodies which Satan torments. His raising the dead was a practical confirmation of that new doctrine of his religion, that the hour is coming when they who are in their graves, shall hear his voice, and shall come forth to the resurrection. You cannot say that the thing is impossible ; for you see in his miracles a sample of that almighty power which shall quicken them that sleep in the dust, a sensible sign that Jesus “hath abolished death,” and is able to “ransom his people from the power of the grave.”†

* Acts x. 38.

† 2 Tim. i. 10 ; Hos. xiii. 14.

Other miracles of Jesus may be accommodated to the doctrines of religion, and much spiritual instruction may be derived from them. But these three, the cure of diseases, the casting out devils, and the raising the dead, are applied by himself in the manner which I have stated. They are not only a confirmation of his divine mission, by being a display of the same kind of power which appears in creation and providence, but, from their nature, they are a proof of the characteristic doctrines of the Gospel; and we are led by considering works so great in themselves, and at the same time so apposite to the purpose for which they were wrought, to transfer to the miracles of Jesus that devout exclamation which an enlarged view of the creation dictated to the Psalmist; "How manifold are thy works, O Lord; in wisdom hast thou made them all."*

I have thus stated the force of that argument which arises from the miracles of Jesus, as they are recorded in the New Testament. They who beheld them said, "When Messias cometh, will he do more miracles than those which this man doth? This is the prophet."† They spoke what they felt, and the deductions of the most enlightened reason upon this subject accord with the feelings of every unbiassed spectator. But we are not the spectators of the miracles of Jesus; the report only has reached our ears; and some further principles are necessary in our situation to enable us to apply the argument from miracles in support of the truth of Christianity.

SECTION II.

It appeared more consistent with the simplicity of nature and the character of man, that one or more persons should be ordained the instruments of conveying an extraordinary revelation to the rest of the world, than that it should be imparted to every individual mind. The commission of these messengers of heaven may be attested by changes upon the order of nature, which the Almighty accomplishes through their agency. But the works which they do, are objects of sense only to their contemporaries with whom they converse. Without a perpetual miracle exhibited in their preservation, those facts which are the proof of the divine revelation must be transmitted to succeeding ages, by oral or written tradition, and, like all other facts in the history of former times, they must constitute part of that information which is received upon the credit of testimony. Accordingly we say, that Jesus Christ, for a few years, did signs and wonders in the presence of his disciples, and before all the people: the report of them was carried through the world after his departure from it by chosen witnesses, to whom he had imparted the power of working miracles; and many of the miracles done both by him and his apostles are now written in authentic genuine records which have reached our days, that we also may believe that he is the Son of God. Supposing then we admit, that the eye-witnesses of the miracles of Jesus reasoned justly when they considered them as proofs of a divine commission; still it remains to be inquired, whether the evidence which has trans-

* Psalm civ. 24.

† John vii. 31—40.

mitted these miracles to us, is sufficient to warrant us in drawing the same inference which we should have drawn if we ourselves had seen them.

There are three questions which require to be discussed upon this subject. Whether miracles are capable of proof? Whether the testimony borne to the miracles of Jesus was creditable at the time it was given? And whether the distance at which we live from that time destroys, or in any material degree impairs its original credibility?

1. It was said by one of the subtlest reasoners of modern times, that a miracle is incapable of being proved by testimony. His argument was this: "Our belief of any fact attested by eye-witnesses rests upon our experience of the usual conformity of facts to the reports of witnesses. But a firm and unalterable experience hath established the laws of nature. When, therefore, witnesses attest any fact which is a violation of the laws of nature, here is a contest of two opposite experiences. The proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can be imagined; and if so, it cannot be surmounted by a proof from testimony, because testimony rests upon experience." Mr. Hume boasted of this reasoning as unanswerable, and he holds it forth in his *Essay on Miracles* as an everlasting check to superstition. The principles upon which the reasoning proceeds have been closely sifted and their fallacy completely exposed, in *Campbell's Dissertation on Miracles*; one of the best polemical treatises that ever was written. Mr. Hume meets here with an antagonist who is not inferior to himself in acuteness, and who, supported by the goodness of his cause, has gained a triumphant victory. I consider this dissertation as a standard book for students of divinity. You will find in it accurate reasoning, and much information upon the whole subject of miracles, and, in particular, a thorough investigation of the question which I have now stated.

It is not true that our belief in testimony rests wholly upon experience; for, as every man has a principle of veracity which leads him to speak truth, unless his mind be under some particular wrong bias, so we are led, by the consciousness of this principle, and by the analogy which we suppose to exist between our own mind and the mind of others, to believe that they also speak the truth, until we learn by experience that they mean to deceive us. It is not accurate to state the firm and unalterable experience which is said to establish the laws of nature as somewhat distinct from testimony; for since the observations of any individual are much too limited to enable him to judge of the uniformity of nature, the word experience, in the sense in which it is used in this proposition, presupposes a faith in testimony, for it comprehends the observations of others communicated to us through that channel. It is not true that a firm and unalterable experience hath established the laws of nature, because the histories of all countries are filled with accounts of deviations from them.

These are objections to the principles of Mr. Hume's argument, which his subtle antagonist brings forward, and presses with much force. But, independently of these inferior points, he has shown that the argument itself is a fallacy; and the sophism lies here. Experience vouches that which is past; but, if the word has any meaning,

experience does not vouch that which is future. Our judgment of the future is an inference which we draw from the reports of experience concerning the past: the reports may be true, and yet our inference may be false. Thus experience declares that it is not agreeable to the usual course of nature for the dead to rise. Suppose twelve men to declare that the dead do usually arise, there would be proof against proof; a particular testimony set against our own personal observations, and against all the reports and observations of others which we had collected upon that subject. But suppose twelve men to declare that one dead man did arise, here is no opposition between the reports of experience and their testimony; for it does not fall within the province of experience to declare that it is impossible for the dead to rise, or that the usual course of nature in this matter shall never be departed from. We may hastily draw such inference from the reports of experience. But the inference is our own: we have taken too wide a step in making it; and it is sophism to say, that because experience vouches the premises, experience vouches also that conclusion which is drawn from them merely by a defect in our mode of reasoning.

When witnesses then attest miracles, experience and testimony do not contradict one another. Experience declares that such events do not usually happen: testimony declares that they have happened in that instance. Each makes its own report, and the reports of both may be true. Instances somewhat similar occur in other cases. Unusual events, extraordinary phenomena in nature, strange revolutions in politics, uncommon efforts of genius or of memory, are all received upon testimony. Magnetism, electricity, and galvanism are opposite to the properties of matter formerly known. Yet many who never saw these new powers exerted, give credit to the reports of the experiments that have been made. Experience indeed begets a presumption with regard to the future. We are disposed to believe that the facts which have been uniformly observed will recur in similar circumstances; and we act upon this presumption. But as new situations may occur, in which a difference of circumstances produces a difference in the event, and as we do not pretend to be acquainted with all the circumstances which discriminate every new case, this presumption is overturned by credible testimony relating facts different from those which have been observed. Without the presumption suggested by experience, we should live in perpetual amazement; without the credit given to testimony, we should often remain ignorant, and be exposed to danger. By the one, we accommodate our conduct to the general uniformity of events; by the other, we are apprized of new facts which sometimes arise. The provision made for us by the Author of our nature is in this way complete, and we are prepared for our whole condition.

There does not appear, then, to be any foundation for saying that a miracle is, from its nature, incapable of being proved by testimony. As nothing can hinder the Author of nature from changing the order of nature whensoever he sees meet, and as one very important purpose in his government is most effectually promoted by employing, at particular seasons, the ministry of men to change this order, a miracle is always a possible event, and becomes, in certain circumstances, not improbable. Like every other possible fact, therefore, it may be com-

municated to such as have not seen it by the testimony of such as have. It is natural indeed, to weigh very scrupulously the testimony of a miracle, because testimony has in this case to encounter that presumption against the fact which is suggested by experience. The person who relates it may, from ignorance, mistake an unusual application of the laws of nature for a suspension of them; an exercise of superior skill and dexterity for a work beyond the power of man; or he may be disposed to amuse himself, and to promote some private end by our credulity. Accordingly, we do not receive any extraordinary fact in common life upon the credit of every man whom we chance to meet. We attend to the character and the manner of the reporter; we lay together the several parts of his report, and we call in every circumstance which may assist us in judging whether he is speaking the truth. The more extraordinary and important the fact be, there is the more reason for this caution; and it is especially proper, in examining the reports of those facts which deserve the name of miracles, *i. e.* works contrary to the course of nature, said to be performed by man, as the evidences of an extraordinary revelation.

2. We are thus led to the second question which I stated, Whether the testimony borne to the miracles of Jesus was credible?

The Apostles were chosen by Jesus to be witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth of all things which he did, both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, and of his resurrection from the dead. This was the commission which they received from him immediately before his ascension, the character under which they appeared before the Jewish council, and the office which they assume in their writings. It is not my business to spread out the circumstances which render theirs a credible testimony, and give to each its proper colouring. It is enough for me to mention the sources of argument.

In judging of the credibility of this testimony, you are led back to that branch of the internal evidence of Christianity which arises from the character of the Apostles, as it appears in their writings—in their unblemished conduct, and distinguished virtues—in that soundness of understanding, and calmness of temper which are opposite to enthusiasm,—and in those simple artless manners which are most unlike to imposture. You are further to observe, that their relation of the miracles of Jesus consists of palpable facts, which were the objects of sense. The power by which a man born blind received his sight was invisible; but that the man was born blind might be learned with certainty from his parents or neighbours: and that, by obeying a simple command of Jesus, he recovered his sight, was manifest to every spectator. The power which raised a dead man was invisible; but that Jesus and his disciples met a large company carrying forth a young man to his burial—that this young man was known to his friends, and believed by all the company to be truly dead, and that upon Jesus' coming to the bier, and bidding him arise, he sat up and began to speak; all these are points which it did not require superior learning or sagacity to discern, but concerning which, any person in the exercise of his senses, who was present and who bestowed an ordinary degree of attention, could not be mistaken. The case is the same with the other miracles. We are not required to rest upon the judgment of the Apostles—upon their acquaintance with physical

causes, for the miraculous nature of the works which Jesus did ; for they gave us simply the facts which they saw, and leave us to make the inference for ourselves. There is no amplification in the manner of recording the miracles, no attempt to excite our wonder, no exclamation of surprise upon their part ; they relate the most marvellous exertions of their Master's power with the same calmness as ordinary facts ; they sometimes mention the feelings of joy and admiration which were uttered by the other spectators ; they hardly ever express their own.

This temperance with which the Apostles speak of all that Jesus did, gives every reader a security in receiving their report, which he would not have felt, had the narration been turgid. Yet he cannot entertain any doubt of their being convinced that the works of Jesus were truly miraculous ; for by these works they were attached to a stranger. While they lived in honest obscurity, an extraordinary personage appeared in their country, and called upon them to follow him. They left their occupations and their homes, and continued for some years the witnesses of all that he did. They were Jews, and had those feelings which have ever distinguished the sons of Abraham with regard to the national religion. Their education, instead of enlarging their views, had confirmed their prejudices. Yet they were converted : with every thing else, they forsook their religion, and joined a man who was the author of a system which professed to supersede the law of Moses. They received him as the promised Messiah. But, possessed with the fond hopes of the Jewish nation, they believed that he was a temporal prince, come to restore the kingdom to Israel, and to make the Jews masters of the world. They were undeceived. Yet this disappointment did not shake their faith. Although they had followed Jesus in the expectation of being the ministers and favourites of an earthly prince, they were content to remain, during his life, the wandering attendants of a man who had "not where to lay his head ;" and they appeared in public, after his departure from the earth, as his disciples. The body of the Jewish people, attached to the law of Moses, regarded them as traitors to their nation. To the priests and rulers, whose influence depended upon the established faith, they were peculiarly obnoxious. That civil power with which the spirit of the Jewish religion had invested its ministers, was directed against the apostles of Jesus : and without any attempt to disprove the facts which they asserted, every effort was made to silence them by force. They were imprisoned and called before the most august tribunal of the state. There the high priest, armed with all the dignity and authority of his sacred office, commanded them not to preach any more in the name of Jesus. Yet these men, educated in servile dread of the higher powers, with the prospect of instant punishment before their eyes, declared that they would obey God rather than man. Their conduct corresponded to this heroic declaration. Although exposed to the fury of the populace and the vengeance of the rulers, they continued in the words of truth and soberness to execute their commission ; and they sealed their testimony with their blood ; martyrs, not to speculative opinions in which they might be mistaken, but to facts which they declared they had seen and heard, which they said they were commanded to publish, and which no threatening or punishment could make them either deny or conceal.

The history of mankind has not preserved a testimony so complete and satisfying as that which I have now stated. If, in conformity to the exhibitions which the writings of these men give of their character, you suppose their testimony to be true, then you can give the most natural account of every part of their conduct, of their conversation, their steadfastness, and their heroism. But if notwithstanding every appearance of truth you suppose their testimony to be false, inexplicable circumstances and glaring absurdities crowd upon you. You must suppose that twelve men of mean birth, of no education, living in that humble station which placed ambitious views out of their reach and far from their thoughts, without any aid from the state, formed the noblest scheme that ever entered into the mind of man, adopted the most daring means of executing that scheme, and conducted it with such address as to conceal the imposture under the semblance of simplicity and virtue. You must suppose that men guilty of blasphemy and falsehood united in an attempt the best contrived, and which has in fact proved the most successful, for making the world virtuous; that they formed this singular enterprise without seeking any advantage to themselves, with an avowed contempt of honour and profit, and with the certain expectation of scorn and persecution; that although conscious of one another's villany, none of them ever thought of providing for his own security by disclosing the fraud; but that, amidst sufferings the most grievous to flesh and blood, they persevered in their conspiracy to cheat the world into piety, honesty, and benevolence.

They who can swallow such suppositions have no title to object to miracles. They should remember that there is a moral as well as a physical order; that there are certain general principles by which human actions are regulated, and upon which we are accustomed to proceed in our judgments of the conduct of men; and that it is much more difficult to conceive that, in opposition to those principles which analogy and experience have established, such a testimony as the apostles uttered should be false, than that the laws of nature in some particular instances should have been suspended. Of the suspension of the laws of nature we can give a rational account: the purpose for which it is said to have been made renders it not incredible. But the falsehood of testimony in such circumstances would be a phenomenon in the history of the human mind so strange and inexplicable, that we need not be afraid to apply to this case the words of Mr. Hume, although he certainly did not mean them to be so applied: "No testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavours to establish." The falsehood of the testimony of the apostles would be more miraculous, *i. e.* it is more improbable than any fact which they attest.

3. But although the testimony of the apostles appears, upon all the principles according to which we judge of such matters, to have been credible at the time when it was given, it remains to be inquired, whether the distance at which we live from that time does, in any material degree, impair to us its original credibility.

It is allowed that the testimony of the apostles received the strongest confirmation from its having been emitted immediately after the

ascension of Jesus, in the very place where they said he had performed many of his mighty works, under the eye of that government which had persecuted him, and in presence of multitudes to whom they appeared as witnesses of what they declared. This must be allowed by all who are qualified to judge of evidence. Now let it be remembered that the benefit of this confirmation is not lost to us, because, although their testimony was at first oral, given in their preaching to those whom they converted, it was soon recorded in books which we receive upon satisfying evidence as authentic and genuine. There is therefore no room to allege in disparagement of this testimony, the inaccuracy of verbal reports, or the natural disposition to exaggerate in the repetition of every extraordinary event. We are put in possession of the facts as they were published in the lifetime of the apostles, without the embellishments of succeeding ages; and every circumstance which moved those who heard their testimony, is preserved in their books to establish our faith.

The early publication of the Gospels and Acts is to us an unquestionable voucher of the following most important facts,—that the miracles of our Lord and his apostles were not done in a corner before a few selected friends, and by them artfully spread through the world, but were performed openly, in the fields, in the city, in the temple, before enemies who had every opportunity of examining them, who did not regard them with indifference, who were alarmed with the effect which they produced upon the minds of the people, and were zealous in bringing forward every objection. Had any one of these circumstances been false, the early publication of books asserting them would have overturned the scheme. Further, there is much particularity in the narration of many of the miracles: reference is made to time and place; many local circumstances are introduced; persons are marked out, not only by their distress, but by their rank and their names; the emotions of the spectators, the joy of those who received deliverance, the consultations held by rulers, and the public orders in consequence of certain miracles, all enter into the record of these books. While every intelligent reader discerns in this particular detail the most accurate acquaintance with the prejudices and the manners of the times, and is from thence satisfied that the books are authentic, he must also be satisfied that a detail which, by its particularity, called so much attention, and admitted, at the time it was published, of so easy investigation, is itself a voucher of its own truth. Again, the history of the miracles is so closely interwoven with the rest of the narration, that any man who reads it may be satisfied that it could not have been inserted after the books were published.—There are numberless allusions to the miracles even in those passages where none of them are recorded; the faith of the first disciples is said to have been founded upon them, and the change upon their sentiments is truly inexplicable, unless we suppose the miracles to have been done in their presence. All, therefore, who received the Gospels and the Acts in early times, when they could easily examine the truth of the facts, may be considered as setting their seal to the miracles of Jesus and his apostles; and the number of the first converts out of Judea and Jerusalem forms, in this way, a cloud of witnesses.

That confirmation of the testimony of the apostles, which appears to be implied in the faith of all the first Christians, is rendered much more striking, by the peculiar nature of a large part of the New Testament. I mean the epistles to the different churches. Paul, in several of the epistles which he sent by particular messengers to those whose names they bear, and which were authenticated to the whole Christian world by his superscription, mentions the miracles which he had performed, the effect which his miracles had produced, and the extraordinary powers which he had imparted. A large portion of the first Epistle to the Corinthians is occupied with a discourse concerning spiritual gifts, in which he speaks of them as common in that church, as abused by many who possessed them, and as inferior in excellence to moral virtue. In his first Epistle to the Thessalonians, which is known to have been the earliest of the apostolical writings, Paul says, “Our Gospel came to you not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost; and they, *i. e.* your own citizens, in their progress through different parts of the world, show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned from idols to serve the living God.”* Here is a letter written not twenty years after the ascension of Jesus, sent, as soon as it was written, to the church of Thessalonica to be read there, and in the neighbouring churches, copied and circulated by those to whom it was addressed, uniformly quoted since that time by the succession of Christian writers, and come down to us with every evidence that can be desired, indeed without any dispute of its being a genuine letter. In this letter the apostle tells the Thessalonians that they had been converted to the Gospel by the miracles of those who preached it, and that the effect which this conversion had produced upon their conduct was talked of everywhere. If these facts had not been known to the Thessalonians, the letter would have been instantly rejected, and the character of him who wrote it would have sunk into contempt. Its being publicly read, held in veneration, and transmitted by them, is a proof that every thing said in it concerning themselves is true, and therefore it is a proof that those who could not be mistaken, believed in the miracles of the apostles of our Lord. This argument is handled by Butler, and all the ablest defenders of our religion; and I have been led to state it particularly, because it has always appeared to me an unanswerable argument arising out of the books themselves, a confirmation of the testimony of the apostles that is independent of their personal character, and yet is demonstrative of the estimation in which they were held by their contemporaries, and of the credit which we may safely give to their report.

4. It only remains to be added upon this question, that a testimony thus strongly confirmed is not contradicted by any opposite testimony. The books of the New Testament are full of concessions made by the adversaries of Christianity; concessions, the force of which must be admitted by all who believe the books to be authentic: and it is very remarkable, that concessions of exactly the same kind with those made by the Jews in our Saviour’s days, were made by the zealous and learned adversaries of our faith in the first four centuries. Celsus,

* 1 Thess. i. 5, 9.

Porphyry, Hierocles, and Julian did not deny the facts; they only attempted to disparage them, or to ascribe them to magic. Julian was emperor of Rome in the fourth century. He had renounced Christianity, and his zeal to revive the ancient heathen worship made him the bitterest enemy of a system which condemned all the forms of idolatry. Yet this man, with every wish to overturn the establishment which Christianity had received from Constantine, does not pretend to say in his work against the Christians, that no miracles were performed by Jesus. In one place he says, "Jesus, who rebuked the winds, and walked on the seas, and cast out dæmons, and as you will have it, made the heavens and the earth." In another place, "Jesus has been celebrated about three hundred years, having done nothing in his lifetime worthy of remembrance, unless any one thinks it a mighty matter to heal lame and blind people, and exorcise dæmoniacs in the villages of Bethsaida and Bethany."* The prejudices of the emperor led him to speak slightly of the miracles; but the facts are admitted by him. It was reserved for infidels at the distance of seventeen hundred years from the event, to dispute a testimony which had appeared satisfying to those who heard it, and which had not received any contradiction in the succession of ages. Because they did not believe in magic, and saw the futility of that account of the works of Jesus which the prejudices of the times had drawn from their predecessors in infidelity, they have taken a new ground, and they affirm, against the principles of human nature, against the faith of history, and the concessions of the earliest adversaries, that the works never were done. But Christianity has nothing to fear from any change in the mode of attack. Sound philosophy will always furnish weapons sufficient to repel the aggressor; and the truth will be the more firmly established by every display of the mutability of error.

It appears then, that even that part of the external evidence of Christianity, which from its nature is the most likely to be affected by length of time, is not evanescent; that various circumstances preserve it from diminution; and that we, in these latter ages, may certainly know the truth of the testimony borne by those who declare in the books of the New Testament that which they saw and heard.

SECTION III.

THE subject would now be exhausted if the only miracles recorded in history were those to which Jesus and his Apostles made their appeal. This singular attestation, given upon so important an occasion, would then appear a decisive mark of the interposition of the Almighty; and every person who believes the books of the New Testament to be authentic, might be expected to join in the opinion of Nicodemus, who said to Jesus, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou dost, except God be with him."† But the subject is involved in new difficulties, and assumes a much more complicated form, when we recollect that

* Lardner's *Heath. Test.* ch. xlv.

† John iii. 2.

accounts of prodigies and miracles abound in all history, that these miracles are generally connected with the religion of the country in which the record of them is preserved, and that, as the religions of different countries are widely different, the miracles of one country appear to contradict the miracles of another. If it be said that all the reports of miracles, excepting those recorded in the scriptures, are false, then it follows that there must be a facility of imposition in this matter against which the human mind has never been proof. If some other reports of miracles, besides those in scripture, are admitted to be true, then it seems to follow, that miracles are not the unequivocal mark of a divine commission.

This multitude of reports concerning miracles has afforded much triumph to the adversaries of Christianity, and, in the opinion of Mr. Hume, the authority of any testimony concerning a religious miracle is so much diminished by the ridiculous stories, and the gross impositions of the same kind in all ages, that men of sense should lay down a general resolution to reject it without any examination. The zeal with which he writes, has led him to recommend a resolution very unbecoming a philosopher. At the same time, it must be allowed that, upon the one hand, the prejudice arising from the multitude of false miracles which have been reported and believed, and, upon the other hand, the suspicion that out of the number preserved in ancient history, some may have been real miracles, furnish a very plausible objection against this branch of the external evidence of Christianity; an objection which every person whose business it is to defend the truth of our religion must be prepared to meet; and an objection which there is the more reason for studying with care, because the attempts to answer it have not always been conducted with sufficient ability and prudence, and some zealous champions for Christianity have mistaken the ground which ought to be maintained in repelling this attack.

The four observations which follow, appear to me to embrace the leading points in this controversy, and when properly extended by reading and reflection, will be found sufficient to remove the objection arising from the multitude of miracles mentioned in history.

1. No religion, except the Jewish and Christian, which, by every person who understands the Gospel, are accounted one religion,—no other religion that we know of, claimed to be received upon the footing of miracles performed by its author.

Some of the ancient lawgivers said, that they had private conferences with the Deity, in which the system of religious or civil polity, which they established, was communicated to them. But none of them pretended to produce, in the presence of the people, changes upon the order of nature. The Pagan mythology was much more ancient than any record of miracles in profane history. Many of the achievements of the gods run back into those periods of which there is no history that is not accounted fabulous;—some are known to the learned to be an allegorical method of conveying moral or physical truth; and others are merely the colouring which fable and poetry gave to the transactions of a remote antiquity handed down by oral tradition. The miracles recorded in the times of authentic history coincided with a superstition already established, the influence of which

prepared the minds of men for receiving them. They were performed by priests, or men of rank, to whom the people were accustomed to look up with reverence; generally in temples consecrated by the offerings of ages, where it was impious for the eye of the worshippers to pry too closely; under the protection of civil government; and in support of a system which antiquity had hallowed, and which the law commanded the citizens to respect. The miracles of the Gospel, on the other hand, were performed by obscure despised men, in the midst of enemies, as the vouchers of a new doctrine which was accounted an insult to the gods, and which did not flatter the passions of men. It is manifest that the cases are widely different; and before proceeding to any particular examination of the heathen miracles, you are warranted in considering the whole multitude of them as clearly discriminated from the miracles recorded in Scripture, by this circumstance, that they were not wrought for the purpose of procuring credit to a new system of faith. In the seventh century, Mahomet appeared in Arabia, calling himself the chief of the prophets of God, sent to extirpate idolatry, and to establish a new and perfect religion. He acknowledged the divine mission both of Moses and of Jesus. He often mentions the evident miracles which Jesus wrought, and he has preserved the names of the persons whom our Lord raised from the dead. Those who opposed him demanded a sign of his mission. He gave various reasons for not complying with this demand, and in different places of the Koran appears solicitous to obviate the doubts which his refusal excited. But although his reasons were not satisfying, and he was harassed with importunity,—although he lived amongst a barbarous unlearned people, and although he possessed a very uncommon share of ability and address, he had the prudence never to make the experiment of working a miracle, and he confesses that God, in his sovereignty, had withheld from him that power. The Church of Rome claims the power which Mahomet did not assume, and the history of that Church is full of wonders said to be performed at the shrines of saints and martyrs, by the divine virtue residing in a relic, or by the power committed to a religious order, to a particular sect, or to the whole Church. But all these are in support of a system already established, and in conformity to the wishes and expectations of the spectators; and, like the heathen miracles, they extend the prevailing superstition by introducing or confirming doctrines, rites, and practices, exactly similar to those which had been formerly received.

It appears, then, from this review, that the history of the world does not present, out of that multitude of miracles which it has recorded, any that were performed under the disadvantages which attended the Christian, for the purpose of introducing a change upon the religious sentiments of mankind. All the rest were aided by the prevailing opinions; these alone were opposed by them: all the rest found men ready to believe; these alone produced a new faith.

2. As the circumstance which I have mentioned forms, upon a general view of the matter, a clear discrimination of the miracles of the Bible, so, when we enter upon a particular examination, there appears to be the most striking difference between them and all other miracles, in the evidence with which they are transmitted. The tes-

timony for a miracle requires to be tried with caution, because it contradicts the presumption suggested by experience; and the more instances there are of imposition or mistake in reports of this kind, there is the more reason for weighing every report with the most scrupulous exactness. When we proved the testimony borne by the apostles to the miracles of Jesus, we found a multitude of circumstances which conspire to render it credible. But when we try, by the same standard of sound criticism, the testimony borne either to heathen or to popish miracles, it is found to be very much wanting. Many of the heathen miracles were prodigies which had no connexion with any religious system, or they were phenomena which appeared wonderful to ignorant men, but which a more enlarged acquaintance with nature has enabled us to explain. Others were extraordinary works, recorded long after the time when they are said to have been performed, and recorded by historians who, while they adorn their writings with popular stories, are careful to distinguish the narration, which they consider as authentic, from the reports which they retail, because they received them. The miracles which Tacitus reports as performed by the Emperor Vespasian, the feats of Alexander of Pontus, which we learn from Lucian, who represents him as an impostor, and the works ascribed to Apollonius of Tyana, whom some of the later Platonists are said to have raised up as a rival to our Lord,—all these have been examined by men of learning and judgment; and the most zealous friend of Christianity could not wish for a more favourable display of the unexceptionable testimony upon which its miracles are received, than is obtained by contrasting it with the air of falsehood which runs through all these accounts.

Mr. Hume has been solicitous to place the evidence of some popish miracles in the most advantageous light, and he has collected, with an air of triumph, various circumstances which conspired to attest the miracles said to be performed about the beginning of the last century, in the church-yard of St. Medard, at the tomb of Abbé Paris. But although a particular purpose induced him to assume the appearance of an advocate for these miracles, yet the imposture was manifest at the time to many who lived upon the spot, and it has since that time been completely exposed in several treatises. In Campbell's Dissertation, in the Criterion by Dr. Douglas, late bishop of Salisbury, in Macknight's Truth of the Gospel History, and in other books, there is an investigation of many pretended miracles; and I believe it will be acknowledged, without hesitation, that Dr. Campbell and Dr. Douglas have clearly shown, with regard to all the miracles to which their investigation extends, either that the accounts of them, from the circumstances, appear to be false, or that the facts, from their nature, are not miraculous. I am inclined to think that, as far as this investigation can be carried, it will be found uniformly to apply to the miracles recorded in heathen story, or in popish legends; and that, as a person who had been accustomed to read much history and much fable, is at no loss to distinguish the one from the other when they are presented to him, so any one who duly considers the circumstances of the case, will most readily discriminate the precise assured testimony of miracles wrought by Jesus as a divine teacher, which eye-witnesses submitted at the very time and place to the examination of their enemies, from

the hesitating suspicious record of wonders said to be performed for some insignificant purpose, which the historians did not see, or which the rank and characters of the person to whom they are ascribed, preserved from the scrutiny even of those who saw them. The evidence of the miracles of the Gospel, far from being diminished by the number of impostures, is very much illustrated by this contrast. Men indeed cannot perceive the difference with an exercise of understanding.—They are required here, as upon every other subject, to separate truth from falsehood, to “prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good.”* Extensive information and enlightened criticism are called in to be the handmaids of religion; and the continued increase of human knowledge, instead of giving Christians any reasonable ground of apprehending danger, enables them to defend the principles which they have embraced, dissipates objections which might occur to the ignorant, and establishes the faith of those who inquire.

I said, I am inclined to think, that if the investigation of which Dr. Douglas and Dr. Campbell have given a specimen, were extended farther, it would be found to apply uniformly to the miracles recorded in heathen story or in popish legends. I used this guarded expression, because I do not consider any man as warranted to say, before he has examined them, that all apparent miracles, excepting those recorded in the Bible, may be accounted for by the dexterity of an impostor, or by the carelessness or ignorance of the spectators.

3. And, therefore, my third observation is, that although we should ascribe some of the extraordinary works recorded in history to the agency of evil spirits, the argument from miracles, for the truth of Christianity, is not impaired.

They who can satisfy their minds that such works are not miraculous, or that the accounts of them are false, leave the argument from miracles entire to Judaism and Christianity. They who cannot satisfy their minds in this manner, and who judge from the nature of the works, or the purpose which they promote, that they did not proceed from God, are led by their principles to ascribe them to some intermediate beings between God and man. But this system, as we have been taught by our Lord to reason,† does not affect the argument from miracles. For thus stands the case: The orders of intermediate beings are wholly unknown to human reason. There may be good, and there may be bad spirits, and their measure of power may be more, or it may be less. But as we infer from all the appearances of nature, and especially from the constitution of our own minds, that this world is not the work of an evil being, so having found that the nature of the revelation contained in the New Testament affords a very strong presumption of its coming from God, we cannot suppose that the miracles, which are the direct proof of this presumption, and which actually were the means of establishing the Gospel, came from an evil being. The conduct of the adversary of mankind was indeed very opposite to the cunning which is ascribed to him, if he gave his sanction to the man who was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and employed his power to undermine his own kingdom, and put an end to his own malicious joy. As far, then, as the argument

* 1 Thess. v. 21.

† Matt. chap. xii.

from miracles for the truth of Christianity is concerned, the power of evil spirits is merely a speculative point, upon which, as upon many other speculative points concerning which our information is imperfect, different opinions may be held without any injury to the truth. Whatever system we adopt with regard to the power of Satan, howsoever evil spirits may be supposed to have acted at other times, we are as certain as the nature of the thing can make us, that their power was not exerted in the establishment of our faith, and we rest in the miracles of Jesus as wrought by the finger of God.

But, although speculations concerning the power of evil spirits are in no degree necessary to a rational belief of Christianity, yet they will naturally fall in your way, when you are investigating the argument from miracles, and you ought not to be strangers to the grounds upon which the different opinions rest. It has been said, that God alone can work miracles, because the sovereign of the universe never will permit any evil spirit to encroach so far upon the prerogative of his majesty, as to produce any work contrary to the order of nature. This opinion seems to present the most honourable view of the Almighty; it professes to afford security against many delusions, which, according to other systems, are practicable; it leaves the argument from miracles clear and unembarrassed, and it has been supported by much ingenious reasoning. But it appears to me presumptuous, because it assumes more, and pronounces with a more decisive tone concerning the conduct of the divine government, than is competent to our ignorance. It contradicts the obvious interpretation of several passages of scripture, and the attempts to give those passages a meaning not inconsistent with it, have tortured scripture in a manner which is not justifiable. It has been said, on the other hand, that evil spirits have been accustomed, in all ages, to exercise their power in astonishing, deluding, and misleading the minds of men; that all false religions have been supported by their influence, and that they are continually busied in corrupting true religion. Even the able and profound Cudworth represents it as unquestionable, that Apollonius of Tyana was made choice of by the policy, and assisted by the powers of the kingdom of darkness, for the doing some things extraordinary, in order to derogate from the miracles of our Saviour; and enable Paganism to bear up against the attacks of Christianity. When the matter is thus stated, a most uncomfortable view of the moral state of the universe is presented to us; a view which, without some qualification, approaches very near to the Manichæan system, by subjecting the feeble race of man, in their most important concerns, alternately to the dominion of opposite powers. The safe opinion upon this subject appears to me to lie in the middle between these two. We cannot pretend to say that an intermediate being never is allowed to suspend the laws of nature. But we are certain, that all power is dependant upon the Lord of nature. We should be careful not to bewilder ourselves, by carrying the ideas suggested by the weakness of human government into our speculations concerning the ways of God; and we should always remember, that, in the administration of Him, whose eyes are in every place, there can be no delay or opposition to his purpose from the multitude of his ministers. "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven."

God is all in all. The power of working miracles may descend from the Almighty through a gradation of good spirits; and he may commission evil spirits, by exercising the power given to them, to prove his people, or to execute a judicial sentence upon those who receive not the love of the truth. But both good and evil spirits are absolutely under his control; they fulfil his pleasure, and he works by them.

This is the system which appears to be intimated in Scripture, as far as the Spirit of God hath seen meet to reveal a speculative point which is not essential to our improvement or comfort. It is indeed very remarkable, that at the introduction of both the Jewish and the Christian dispensations, there seems, according to the most natural interpretation of Scripture, to have been a certain display of the power of evil spirits—I mean in the works of the Egyptian magicians, and in the demoniacs of the New Testament. But in both cases the display appears to have been permitted by God, that it might be made manifest there was in nature a superior power. The magicians, after they had imitated some of the works of Moses, could go no farther, but said, “This is the finger of God;” and therefore God says to Pharaoh, “For this cause have I raised thee up for to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth.”* The evil spirits which had afflicted the bodies of men, owned, in like manner, the power of Jesus, and retired at his command. Therefore, he says, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven;” and again, “If I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come to you.”† Both dispensations give warning of false prophets who should show signs. Moses says, “If there arise among you a prophet and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, saying, let us go after other gods, thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether you love him with all your soul.”‡ Our Lord says, “There shall arise false christs, and shall show great signs and wonders;”§ and, it is part of the description which his Apostle gives of Antichrist, “His coming is after the working of Satan; with all power, and signs and lying wonders.”|| Even although you suppose it to be meant by these warnings, that the signs and wonders were to be performed with the assistance of evil spirits, still the miracles upon which the two dispensations are founded, afford a clear demonstration of the supremacy of their Author; and if evil spirits had permission given them to exercise a certain power at those times, it was only to prepare for the destruction of their power.

In the very constitution of the evidence of the two religions, provision is made for preserving the true disciples from the dread of evil spirits. Whatever opinions may have been entertained concerning their power, they manifestly stand forth in the Bible, confessing their inferiority, and furnishing by this confession, to all whose understandings are sound, and whose hearts are upright, a perpetual antidote against the fears of superstition.

It appears, then, that the system which ascribes many of the mira-

* Exod. viii. 19; ix. 16.

§ Matt. xxiv. 24.

† Luke x. 18; xi. 20.

|| 2 Thess. 2, 9.

‡ Deut. xiii. 1, 2, 3.

cles recorded in history to the agency of evil spirits, does not detract from the evidence of Christianity, because our faith rests upon works whose distinguishing character, and whose manifest superiority to the power of evil spirits, are calculated to remove every degree of hesitation in applying the argument which miracles afford.

One observation more shuts up the subject.

4. The uncertainty with regard to the duration of miracles in the Christian Church, does not invalidate the argument arising from the miracles of Jesus and his apostles.

All Protestants, and many Catholics, believe, that the claim of working miracles which the Church of Rome advances as one mark of her being the true Church, is without foundation; and no impartial discerning person, who reads the history of the wonders which for many centuries have been recorded by that Church, can hesitate a moment in classing them with the tricks of heathen priests. Dr. Middleton, in his letter from Rome, has shown that many of the Popish are an imitation of the heathen miracles, and even those who do not admit that they have been borrowed, cannot deny the resemblance. On the other hand, every Christian believes, that real miracles were performed in the days of the Apostles; and the unanimous tradition of the Christian Church has preserved the memory of many in succeeding ages. It is natural then to inquire at what period the true miracles ceased, and the fictitious commenced. Some mark is called for, to distinguish so important an era, and the imprudence of which some Christian writers have been guilty in their attempts to fix it, has afforded a kind of triumph to those who were willing to expose every weak quarter in the defence of Christianity. Dr. Middleton, in his book, entitled—*A free Inquiry into the miraculous powers which have been supposed to subsist in the Christian Church*, maintained this position, that after the days of the Apostles, the Church did not possess any standing power of working miracles. Those who were zealous for the honour of the early fathers, attacked, with much bitterness, a position which directly impugned their authority. Some of them very unadvisedly said, that if all the miracles, after the days of the Apostles, which were attested unanimously by the primitive fathers, are no better than enthusiasm and imposture, then we are deprived of our evidence for the truth of the Gospel miracles. Others undertook to defend the reality of the miracles in the first four centuries; and they weakened their defence by extending their frontier.—The controversy was keenly agitated about the middle of the last century; and the attention of the world was lately drawn to it, by the fascinating language of Mr. Gibbon, who mixing truth and falsehood together, and colouring both with his masterly pencil, has contrived to reflect from the claims of the primitive Church, a degree of suspicion upon the Gospel miracles.

No person who believes the Gospel will think it incredible, that miracles were performed during the whole of the first century, because the Apostle John lived about the end of it, and many of those to whom the Apostles had communicated spiritual gifts, probably survived it. All the Christian writers of the second and third centuries affirm, that miraculous gifts did, in certain measure, continue in the Christian Church, and were, at times, exerted in the cure of dis-

eases, and the expulsion of demons. But those who have examined their writings with critical accuracy, have shown that there is much looseness and exaggeration in the language which Mr. Gibbon has employed with regard to these gifts. To satisfy you of this, I shall place a passage from that historian, over against passages from Irenæus, Origen, and Eusebius. Mr. Gibbon says, the Christian Church, from the times of the Apostles and their first disciples, has claimed an uninterrupted succession of miraculous powers. Amongst these he mentions the power of raising the dead. In the days of Irenæus, he affirms, about the end of the second century, the resurrection of the dead was far from being esteemed an uncommon event; the miracle was frequently performed on necessary occasions, by great fasting and the joint supplications of the church of the place, and the persons thus restored to their prayers, lived afterwards among them many years.* Now hear Irenæus himself. The true disciples of Jesus, by a power derived from him, confer blessings upon other men, as each has been enabled. Some expel demons so effectually, that they who have been delivered from evil spirits, believe and become members of the church; others have knowledge of futurity, see visions, and utter prophecies; others cure diseases by the imposition of hands; and, as we have said, the dead too have been raised, and remained some years with us.† Observe he changes the tense in the last clause; it is *ἡγεσθῆσαν, παρήμεναι*. He does not speak of the power of raising the dead as present, but as having been exerted in some time past, so that the persons who were the objects of it reached to his own days. Mr. Gibbon himself has shown that the Bishop of Antioch did not know, in the second century, that the power of raising the dead existed in the Christian church; and no Christian writer, in the second or third century, mentions this miracle as performed in his time. You may judge from this specimen of the accuracy of Mr. Gibbon. Origen says, in the third century, signs of the Holy Spirit were shown where Jesus began to teach, more numerous after his ascension; and, in succeeding times, less numerous. But even at this day, there are traces of it in a few men who have had their souls cleansed.‡ Eusebius, in the beginning of the fourth century, says, Our Lord himself, even at this day, is wont to manifest some small portions of his power in those whom he judges proper for it.§ If you give credit to these respectable testimonies, and they are entitled to respect both from the manner in which they are given, and from the characters of the authors, you will believe that the profusion of miraculous gifts which was poured forth in the days of the Apostles was gradually withdrawn in succeeding ages, and that the fathers were sensible of this gradual cessation, but boasted that some gifts did continue, and were occasionally exerted during the first three centuries. This gradual cessation is agreeable to the analogy of the divine procedure in other matters. It left an occasional support to the faith of Christians, so long as they were exposed to persecution under the heathen emperors; and it serves to account for what Mr. Gibbon calls the insensibility of the Christians with regard to the cessation of miraculous powers. If

* Gibbon's Rom. Hist. ch. 15.

† Iren. lib. ii. cap. 32.

‡ Orig. contra Cels. lib. vii. p. 337.

§ Eus. Dem. Ev. lib. iii. p. 109.

these powers were withdrawn, one by one, and the display of them became gradually less frequent, the insensibility of Christians with regard to the cessation of miracles is not wonderful; and the writers whom I have quoted, have spoken of the subject in that manner which was most natural.

Although it seems probable that miraculous powers did, in certain measure, continue in the Christian church during the first three centuries, yet it cannot be said that the testimony borne to all the miracles of that period, is unsuspicious. There probably was much credulity and inattention in the relaters, and their reports are destitute of many of those circumstances which are found in the testimony of the Apostles. But, it is always to be remembered, that the two are independent of one another. We do not receive the miracles of the Gospel upon the testimony of the fathers; and, although all the miracles said to be wrought after the days of the Apostles be rejected, the evidence of the works which Jesus and his Apostles did, would rest exactly upon that footing on which we placed it.

It was to be expected, that miraculous gifts, which had perceptibly decreased till the days of Constantine, would cease entirely when the protection afforded by civil government to the Christians rendered them less necessary. Yet we find ecclesiastical history, after Christianity became the religion of the state, abounding with a diversity of the greatest miracles. No wise champion of Christianity will attempt to defend the reality of these wonders; at the same time, the extravagance of the later fictions will not discredit, with any wise inquirer, the miracles of former times. It is obvious to observe, that the Christian world was prepared by having been witnesses of real miracles, for receiving without suspicion such as were fictitious, that the effect which true miracles had produced, might induce vain or deceitful men to employ this engine in accomplishing their own purposes, and that after Christianity was the established religion, the use of this engine became as easy to the Christians, as it was to the heathen priests of old. The innumerable forgeries of this sort, says Dr. Middleton, strengthen the credibility of the Jewish and Christian miracles. For how could we account for a practice so universal, of forging miracles for the support of false religions, if on some occasions they had not actually been wrought for the confirmation of a true one? Or how is it possible that so many spurious copies should pass upon the world, without some genuine original from whence they were drawn, whose known existence and tried success might give an appearance of probability to the counterfeit? We may add, that if these counterfeits were at any time detected, the strong prejudice which would arise from the detection against that religion, in support of which they were adduced, could be counterbalanced only by the unquestionable evidence of the miracles of former times.

It appears then, that the duration of miracles in the Christian church is a question of curiosity in no degree essential to the evidence of our religion. If no miracles were really performed after the days of the apostles, then every Christian receives all that ever were wrought upon unquestionable testimony. If there were some real miracles in aftertimes, they must stand upon their own evidence. We may receive them, or reject them, as they appear to us well or ill vouched;

and we can draw no inference, from the multiplicity of imitations or forgeries, unfavourable to the truth and divinity of the original.

Bonnet, in his philosophical and critical inquiries concerning Christianity, has given, besides much other valuable matter, the most satisfying statement that I have met with of the argument from miracles. Bonnet's work was written in French. An extract of the part of it most interesting to a student in divinity, was translated by a clergyman of this church, and published some years ago.

Bishop Sherlock, in his first volume of sermons, which is chiefly occupied in stating the superiority of revealed to natural religion, has two discourses, the ninth and tenth, upon miracles considered as the proof of revelation. He treats the subject in his usual luminous manner, and suggests many just and useful views.

Newcombe, in his observations on the conduct of our Saviour, has written largely and delightfully of his miracles.

Jortin also, in some of his essays or discourses, and in his remarks on ecclesiastical history, has very ably illustrated the fitness with which our Lord's miracles were adapted both to prove the truth of his religion, and to impress upon his followers the characteristic doctrines of the gospel. This view of the subject is also prosecuted by Ogden in his sermons.

Campbell's Dissertation on Miracles.

Douglas's Criterion.

Butler's Analogy.

Macknight's Truth of the Gospel History.

Paley's Evidences.

Farmer on Miracles.

Cudworth, translated by Mosheim.

Leland's View of Deistical Writers.

Randolph's View of our Lord's Ministry.

Clarke.

Bullock.

Boyle's Lectures.

Middleton.

Sir David Dalrymple.

CHAPTER V.

ILLUSTRATION OF THE EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

THOSE lectures upon Scripture are properly called critical, which are intended to elucidate the meaning of a difficult passage, and to bring out from the words of an author the sense which is not obvious to an ordinary reader. The sources of this elucidation are, such emendations upon the reading or the punctuation as may warrantably be made, an analysis of the particular words, a close attention to the manner of the author, to the scope of his reasoning, and to the circumstances of those for whom he writes; and, lastly, a comparison of the passage, which is the subject of the criticism, with other passages, in which the same matters are treated. There is great room for critical lectures of this kind, and my theological course abounds with specimens of them. Much has been done in this way since the beginning of the last century, by the application of sound criticism to the Holy Scriptures; and one great advantage to be derived from an intimate acquaintance with the learned languages, and from the habit of analysing the authors who wrote in them, is, that you are thereby prepared for receiving that rational exposition of the word of God, which is the true foundation of theological knowledge.

There is another kind of critical lecture, which professes by a general comprehensive view of a passage of scripture, to illustrate some important points in the evidence or genius of our religion. This kind of lecture is applicable to those passages where there is not any obscurity in the expression, any recondite meaning, or any controverted doctrine, but where there is a number of circumstances scattered throughout, the force of which may be missed by a careless or ignorant reader, but which by being arranged and placed clearly in view, may be made to bear upon one point, so as to bring conviction to the understanding, at the same time that they minister to the improvement of the heart. The inimitable manner of Scripture, so natural and artless, yet so pregnant with circumstances the most delicate and the most instructive, affords numberless subjects of this kind of lecture; and I do not know any method so well calculated to give a person of taste and sensibility a deep impression of the excellency and the divinity of the Scriptures. One is tempted by the peculiar fitness of the passages which occur to him, to adopt this mode of lecturing occasionally in speaking to an assembly of Christians, although it cannot be denied that the ordinary method of lecturing by suggesting remarks from particular verses, is more adapted to that measure of understanding, of attention, and of memory, which is found in the generality of hearers.

But such a mode may here be followed with advantage ; and I am led to give you now a specimen of this criticism upon the sense, rather than upon the words of an evangelist, because the eleventh chapter of John's Gospel may be stated in such a light as to illustrate much of what has been said with regard both to the internal evidence of Christianity, and to that branch of the external evidence which arises from miracles.

The eleventh chapter of John is the history of the resurrection of Lazarus, the greatest miracle which Jesus performed. Upon such a general view of the chapter as a critical lecture of this kind is meant to give, we are led to attend to that exhibition of character which the chapter contains—to the nature and circumstances of the miracle—and to the effects which the miracle produced.

I. The exhibition of character which this chapter contains is various, and our attention is directed to several very pleasing objects.

It is natural to speak first of the exhibition given of the character of the historian. The other evangelists have not mentioned this miracle, perhaps out of delicacy to Lazarus, who was alive when they wrote. They did not choose to expose the friend of their master to the fury of the Jews, by holding him forth in writings that were to go through the world, as a monument of his power. But John, who lived to see the destruction of Jerusalem, probably survived Lazarus ; and there was every reason why this evangelist, who has preserved other miracles and discourses which the former historians had omitted, should record this event. It is a subject suited to the pen of John : the beloved disciple seems to delight in spreading it out ; for he has coloured his narration with many beautiful circumstances, which unfold the characters of the other persons, and discover his intimate acquaintance with his master's heart. It is a striking instance of that strict propriety which pervades all the books of the New Testament, and which marks them to every discerning eye to be authentic writings, that the tenderest scenes in our Lord's life, those in which the warmth of his private affections is conspicuous, are recorded by this evangelist. From the others we learn his public life, the grace, the condescension, the benevolence which appeared in all his intercourse with those that had access to him. It was reserved to "the disciple whom Jesus loved" to present to succeeding ages this divine person in his family, and amongst his friends. In his Gospel, we see Jesus washing the feet of his disciples at the last supper that he ate with them. It is John, the disciple that leaned on the bosom of Jesus while he sat at meat, who relates the long discourse in which, with the most delicate sensibility for their condition, he soothes the troubled heart of his disciples, spares their feelings, while he tells them the truth, and gives them his parting blessing. It is John, whom Jesus judged worthy of the charge, who records the filial piety with which, in the hour of his agony, he provided for the comfort of his mother ; and it is John, whose soul was congenial to that of his Master, tender, affectionate, and feeling like his, who dwells upon all the particulars of the resurrection of Lazarus, brings forward to our view the sympathy and attention with which Jesus took part in the sorrows of those whom he loved, and making us intimately acquainted with

them and with him, presents a picture at once delightful and instructive.

The next object in this exhibition of character is the friendship which Jesus entertained for the family of Lazarus. Bethany was a small village upon the mount of Olives, within two miles of Jerusalem, in the road from Galilee. Jesus, who resided in Galilee, and went only occasionally to Jerusalem, was accustomed to lodge with Lazarus in his way to the public festivals: and we are led to suppose, from an incidental expression in Luke,* that during the festivals he went out to Bethany in the evening, and returned to Jerusalem in the morning. To this little family he retired from the fatigues of his busy life, from the disputations of the Jewish doctors, and the bitterness of his enemies; and being, like his brethren, compassed with infirmity, like his brethren also he found refreshment to his soul in the intercourse of those whom he loved. "Now Jesus," says John, "loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." He loved the world; he loved the chief of sinners. That was a love of pity, the compassion which a superior being feels for the wretched. This was the love of kindness, the complacency which kindred spirits take in the society of one another. Of the brother he says to his apostles, with the same cordiality with which you would speak of one like yourselves, "Our friend Lazarus." And although we shall find the character of the two sisters widely different, yet he discerned in both a mind worthy of his friendship.

It appears strange to me, that any person who ever read this chapter can blame the Gospel, as some deistical writers in the last century were accustomed to do, for not recommending private friendship. Can there be a stronger recommendation than this picture of the Author of the Gospel, drawn by the hand of his beloved disciple? When you follow Jesus to Jerusalem, you may learn from his public life, fortitude, diligence, wisdom. When you retire with him to Bethany, you may learn tenderness, confidence, and fellow feeling, with those whom you choose as your friends. The servants of Jesus may not in every situation find persons so worthy of their friendship as this family; and there is neither duty nor satisfaction in making an improper choice. Many circumstances may appoint for individuals days of solitude, and therefore the universal religion of Jesus has wisely refrained from delivering a precept which it may often be impossible to obey. But they who are able to follow the example of their master, by having a heart formed for friendship, and by meeting with those who are worthy of it, have found the medicine of life. Their happiness is independent of noise, and dissipation, and show; amidst the tumult of the world, their spirits enter into rest; and in the quiet, pleasing, rational intercourse of Bethany, they forget the strife of Jerusalem.

The next object in this exhibition is the character of the two sisters, painted in that most perfect and natural manner, which the Scriptures almost always adopt, by actions, not by words. As soon as Lazarus is sick, the two sisters send a message to Jesus, with entire confidence in his power to heal, and his willingness to come. He is

* Luke xxi. 37, 38.

now beyond Jordan ; the countries of Samaria and Galilee lie between Bethany and his present abode. But the sisters of Lazarus knew too well his affection for their brother, and his readiness to do good, to think that distance would prevent his coming. They say no more than, "He whom thou lovest is sick," and they leave Jesus to interpret their wish. When Jesus arrives at Bethany, after the death of Lazarus, the different characters of the two sisters are supported with the most delicate discrimination, even under that pressure of grief which, in the hand of a coarse painter, would have obliterated every distinguishing feature. Martha, who had been "cumbered with much serving," when she had to entertain our Lord, rises with the same officious zeal from the ground, where she was sitting dishevelled and in sackcloth, amongst the friends who had come to comfort her. She rises the moment she hears by some chance messenger that Jesus is at hand, and runs to meet him. Mary, who had sat at the feet of Jesus, so much engaged with his discourse as not to think of providing for his entertainment, is incapable of so brisk an exertion, or thinks it more respectful to Jesus to wait his coming. This difference in the conduct of the two sisters is in the style of nature, according to which the particular temper, and feelings of particular persons, give a very great variety to the language of passion upon occasions equally interesting to all of them. A man may know, he ought to know, every corner in his own heart, how far any part of his conduct proceeds from the defect of good, or the prevalence of wrong principles. But the most intimate acquaintance does not give him access to know all the notions of delicacy and propriety which may restrain, or urge on others at particular seasons, and may give to their conduct, in the eye of careless observers, a very different appearance from that which they would wish ; and it argues both an uncandid spirit, and very little knowledge of the world, to say or to think this man does not feel as he ought, because he does not express his feelings as I would express mine. Martha ran and met Jesus : Mary sat still in the house. When Martha comes to Jesus, there is in her first words a mixture of reproach for his delay, and of confidence in his kindness, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." A gleam of hope, indeed, shoots athwart the sorrowful mind of Martha at the sight of Jesus. But her wish was so great that she is afraid to mention it. "I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee." She has conceived a hope, in the state of her mind it was a wild hope, that her brother whom she had lost might be instantly restored. Jesus composes her spirit, prepares her for this gift, by recalling her thoughts from the general resurrection to himself, and probably gives her some sign or some direction, in consequence of which she goes to the house, and without alarming the Jews who were assembled there, says secretly to her sister, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." This message instantly rouses Mary. Her spirit, bowed down with grief, revives at his call, and without knowing, probably without conceiving the purpose for which he called her, she arose quickly and went to him. When she arrives, there is more submission in her manner than there had been in that of Martha. The marks are stronger of a depressed and afflicted spirit. She fell down at his feet, weeping. But, as if to remind us that we should

look beyond these outward expressions, which, being very much a matter of constitution, vary exceedingly in different persons, the evangelist puts the same words into the mouth of both, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;" and whatever interpretation we give to these words when they are spoken by the one sister, we cannot avoid giving them the same when they are spoken by the other. In this exhibition of the manner of the two sisters there is so much of nature, and of nature appearing strongly in minute circumstances, as to be far superior to that truth of painting which we admire in a fancied picture, and to carry with it an internal evidence that John was a witness of what he describes, and that his drawing is part of a scene which, from the powerful, yet different emotions of the two sisters, had made a deep impression upon his feeling breast.

The next object which presents itself in this moral exhibition, is the character of the Apostles. The Gospels present us with the most natural picture of the Apostles; their doubts, their fears, their slowness of apprehension and of belief. By circumstances that seem to be incidentally recorded, we see them feeling and acting, not indeed in the manner which would have occurred to a rude, unskilful hand, had he attempted to draw those who were honoured with being the companions of Jesus, but in the manner which any one intimately acquainted with the human heart will perceive to be the most natural for men of their condition and education, and situated as they were. We see them differing from one another in sentiments and conduct, with the same kind of variety which is observable amongst our neighbours and companions, each preserving in every situation his peculiar character, and all at the same time uniting in attachment to their master.

Although the companions of Jesus were interested in the fate of his friend Lazarus, yet they did not understand the hints which our Lord gave them. Although sleep is one of the most common images of death, they suppose when Jesus says, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," that he was enjoying a refreshing sleep, by which nature was to work his cure; and not attending to the impropriety of Jesus going a long way to awake him out of such a sleep, they say, "Lord, if he sleep he shall do well." When Jesus tells them plainly "Lazarus is dead," Thomas stands forth, and by one expression presents to us the same character which is more fully unfolded in another chapter of this Gospel.*

All the disciples were filled with sorrow and despair, when they saw their Master condemned, executed, and laid in the tomb. "For as yet," says John, "they knew not the Scripture that he must rise again from the dead." At length, "Jesus came and stood in the midst of them." "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." It happened that Thomas was not present. And when "the other disciples had said to him, we have seen the Lord," his answer was, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." About eight days after, Jesus condescended to give him this proof. "Reach hither," said he, "thy finger, and

* John xx. 9, 19, 20, 24—28.

behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing. And Thomas answered and said, My Lord and my God." He had felt doubts, but his heart appears full of affection and reverence. Now, mark here the same Thomas. The disciples were alarmed at the danger of going back to Judea. They had tried to dissuade their Master, but they find him fixed in his purpose. "Lazarus is dead, nevertheless let us go unto him. Then said Thomas unto his fellow disciples, let us also go, that we may die with him." You see here the same warmth of temper, the same firm determined mind which appeared at the other time, but you see also the same defect of faith. Thomas does not think it possible that Jesus could shelter himself from the Jews. He does not see any purpose that could be served by the journey. He thinks Jesus is going to throw away his life. Yet he resolves himself, and he encourages his fellow disciples not to part with him. Our Master makes a sacrifice of his life. We have forsaken all and followed him. Let us follow him also in this journey; "let us go that we may die with him." It is the strong effort of a mind which loved and venerated Jesus, yet distrusted and did not know his divine power: Thomas faithless, yet affectionate and manly.

Such is the mixture of character which we often meet with in common life. They who are most intimately acquainted with the workings of the human heart, and who have observed most accurately the manners of those around them, will best perceive the truth of that picture which the Evangelists have drawn of themselves, and they will be struck with the force of that internal evidence for the Gospel history which arises from this simple natural record. We cannot attend to this picture without recollecting the divine power which, out of these feeble doubting men, raised the most successful instruments of spreading the religion of Jesus. There was no want of faith after the day of Pentecost. Thomas was one of that company which was assembled, when they were all filled with the Holy Ghost; and he who now says, "Let us go and die with Jesus," with power gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord.*

The principal object in this moral exhibition yet remains. It is Jesus himself. The striking feature throughout the whole is tenderness and love. But we discern also prudence, fortitude, and dignity; and this chapter may thus serve as a specimen of that most perfect and most difficult character, which the Apostles were incapable of conceiving, and which, had they conceived it, they would have been unable to support in every situation with such exact propriety, if they had not drawn it from the life.

After he receives the message from the sisters, he relieves himself from the importunity of his disciples, by an assurance which was sufficient to remove their anxiety, and he lingers for two days in the place where he was. The purpose of his lingering was, that Lazarus might be truly dead, that he might not merely recover a man who was sick, but that he might raise a man who had been in the grave. But this lingering did not proceed from indifference. Mark how beautifully the fifth verse is thrown in between the assurance given to the dis-

* Acts iv. 31, 33.

ciples, and the resolution to delay. He loved the family. He entered into their sorrows. His sympathy for them, indeed, yields to his prosecution of the great purpose for which he came, yet his love is not the less for delay. How tender and how soothing ! The merciful High Priest, to whom Christians still send their requests, is not forgetful, although he does not instantly grant them. He loves and pities his own. But he does not think their time always the best. His own time for showing favour is set. No intervening circumstance can prevent its coming; and when it arrives, they themselves will acknowledge that it has been well chosen, and all their sorrow will be forgotten and overpaid by the joy which is brought to their souls. One of the finest moral lessons is conveyed by this delay of Jesus. It is pleasing to act from kindness, compassion, and love. But the excess of good affections may sometimes mislead us; and there are considerations of prudence, of fidelity, and justice, which may give to the conduct of the most tender-hearted man an appearance of coldness and severity. The world may judge hastily in such instances. But let every man be satisfied in his own mind, first, that he has good affections; and next, that the considerations which sometimes restrain the exercise of them, are such that he need not be ashamed of their influence.

It is strongly marked in this moral picture, that the delay of Jesus, although dictated by prudence, did not proceed from any consideration of his personal safety. For, when the disciples represented the danger of retiring to Judea, his answer is, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." His meaning is explained by other similar expressions. The Jews divided the day both in summer and winter into twelve hours, so that an hour with them marked, not as with us, a certain portion of time, but the twelfth part of a day, longer in summer, and shorter in winter. The time of his life upon earth was the day of Jesus, during which he had to finish the work given him to do. While this day continued, none of his enemies had power to take away his life, and he had nothing to fear in fulfilling the commandment of God. When this day ended, his work ended also; he fell indeed into the hands of his enemies; but he was ready to be offered up. And thus in the same picture Jesus is exhibited as gentle, feeling, compassionate to his friends, undaunted in the face of his enemies, assiduous and fearless in working the work of Him that sent him. There shines throughout the whole of this picture a dignity of manner; no indecent haste; no distrust of his own power; a delay, which rendered one work more difficult, yet which is not employed in preparing for an uncommon exertion.—"Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes, that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe." He wishes to give his disciples a more striking manifestation of his divine power; and the display is made for their sakes, not for his own. With what awful solemnity does he unfold to Martha his exalted character in these words: "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die;" and how suitably to the authority implied in that character does he require from Martha a confession of her faith in him!

Yet how easily does he descend from this dignity to mingle his tears with those of his friends. "When he saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled :*" and as they led him to the sepulchre, "Jesus wept." How amiable a picture of the Saviour of the world ! He found upon earth an hospital full of the sound of lamentation, a dormitory in which some are every day falling asleep, and they who remain are mourning over those who to them are not. He hath brought a cordial to revive our spirits, while we are bearing our portion of this general sorrow, and he hath opened to our view a land of rest. But even while he is executing his gracious purpose, his heart is melted with the sight of that distress which he came to relieve, and although he was able to destroy the king of terrors, he was troubled when he beheld in the company of mourners a monument of his power. We do not read that Jesus ever shed tears for his own sufferings. When he was going to the cross, he turned round and said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me." But he wept over Jerusalem when he thought of the destruction that was coming upon it :* and here the anguish of his friends draws from him groans and tears. He was soon to remove their anguish. But it was not the less bitter during its continuance ; and it is the present distress of his friends into which his heart enters thus readily.

Let the false pride of philosophy place the perfection of the human character in an equality of mind, unmoved by the events that befall ourselves or others. But Christians may learn from the example of him who was made like his brethren, that the variety in the events of life was intended by the author of nature as an exercise of feeling ; that it is no part of our duty to harden our hearts against the impressions which they make, and that we need not be ashamed of expressing what we feel. That God, who chastens his children, loves a heart which is tender before him ; and Jesus, who wept himself, commands us to weep with them that weep. The tears shed are both a tribute to the dead, and an amiable display of the heart of the living, and they interest every spectator in the persons from whom they flow.

Thus have we seen in this mortal picture of the character of Jesus, tenderness, compassion, prudence, fortitude, dignity, "Christ, the power of God, and the wisdom of God,"† the strength of an almighty arm displayed by a man like his brethren, "the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."‡ The assemblage of qualities is so uncommon, and the harmony with which they are blended so entire, that they convey to every intelligent reader an impression of the divinity of our religion, and we cannot contemplate this picture without feeling the sentiment which was afterwards expressed by the Centurion who stood over against the cross of Jesus : "Truly this was the Son of God."§

II. Circumstances of the miracle.

Mr. Hume and other philosophers, both before and after his time, have denied the conclusiveness of the general argument from miracles,

* Luke xxiii. 28; xix. 41.

‡ John i. 14.

† 1 Cor. i. 24.

§ Matt. xxvii. 54.

or they have endeavoured to destroy that evidence from testimony upon which we give credit to the works recorded in the Gospel. But there is a set of minute writers in the deistical controversy, who have adopted a style of philological or verbal objections, which would set aside the truth of the record, not by any general reasoning, but by supposed instances of inaccuracy or impropriety in particular narrations. This style of objections enters into ordinary conversation; it is level to the understanding of many, who are incapable of apprehending a general argument; and it is the usual refuge of those who have nothing else to oppose to the evidences of the Christian religion.

You will find objections of this kind occasionally thrown out in many deistical writers. But they were formed into a sort of system in a treatise published about sixty years ago, by Mr. Woolston, and entitled, “Discourses upon the Miracles of our Saviour,” a book now very little known, but which drew great attention at the time, and was overpowered by a variety of able answers. Mr. Woolston attempted to show that the earliest and most respectable writers of the Christian church understood the miracles of our Saviour purely in an allegorical sense, as emblems of the spiritual life; and that there was good reason for doing so, because the accounts, taken in a literal sense, are absurd and incredible. He has been convicted by those who have answered him, of gross disingenuity in maintaining the first of his positions. It is true that the fathers, even of the first century, were led by their attachment to that philosophy in which they had been educated, to seek for hidden spiritual meanings in the plain historical parts of Scripture. And Origen, in the third century, went so far as to undervalue the literal sense in comparison with the allegorical, saying, “the Scriptures are of little use to those who understand them as they are written.”* He has pursued this manner of interpreting the miracles of our Saviour much farther than became a sound reasoner. But although it appeared to him more sublime and instructive than a simple exposition of the facts recorded, yet it proceeds upon a supposition of the truth of the facts; and accordingly in his valuable work against Celsus the Jew, where he answers the objections to the truth of Christianity, and states with great force of reason the arguments upon which our faith rests, he appeals repeatedly to the miracles which Jesus did, which he enabled his apostles to do, and some faint traces of which remained in the days of Origen. He says that the miracles of Christ converted nations, and that it would have been absurd in the apostles to have attempted the introduction of a new religion without the help of miracles. Mr. Woolston, therefore, is left without the support of that authority which he pleads; for Origen, the most allegorical of the fathers, even where he prefers the allegorical, does not exclude the literal sense; and his argumentative discourse proceeds upon the acknowledged truth of the facts recorded.

The second position does not profess to rest upon the authority of any name, but upon the nature of the narration, which, Mr. Woolston says, is so filled with monstrous incredibilities and absurdities, that the best way in which any person can defend it, is by having recourse to the allegorical sense. But in this way, the argument from miracles

* Origen, *Stromata*, lib. x.

is totally lost, because, if we regard them not as facts, but as a method of conveying spiritual instruction, the appeal which Jesus continually made to the works that he did, must appear to us chimerical or false. Although, therefore, Mr. Woolston has the effrontery to pretend a zeal for the honour of Jesus, in his attempts to get rid of the difficulties arising from the literal sense, that literal sense must be defended by every Christian.

It is impossible to lead you through all the objections which have been made by Woolston and other writers. But I shall point out the sources from whence satisfying answers may be drawn, and give some specimens of the application of these sources.

The sources of answers are three : An intimate acquaintance with local manners, customs, and prejudices—an analysis of the true meaning of the words in the original—and a close attention to the whole contexture of the narration.

1. An intimate acquaintance with local manners, customs, and prejudices. One of the most satisfying evidences of the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, arises from their reference to the peculiarities of that country in which we say the authors of them lived, a reference so exact, so uniform, and extending to such minuteness, as to afford conviction to any person who considers it properly, that these are not the production of a later age or another country.—This continual reference, while it is a proof of their authenticity, colours every narration contained in them, with circumstances which appear strange to a reader who is not versant in Jewish antiquities; and this strangeness furnishes many objections to those who are themselves ignorant, or who wish to impose upon the ignorance of others. But the phantom is dissipated by that local knowledge which may be easily acquired and easily applied.

2. An analysis of the words in the original. Particular objections against the miracles of Jesus are multiplied by this circumstance, that we read a narration of them, having a continual reference to ancient manners, not in the language in which it was originally written, but in a translation. For, allowing that translation all the praise that is due to it, and it deserves a great deal, still it must happen that the words in the translation do not always convey precisely the same meaning with those to which they correspond in the original.—Different combinations of ideas, and different modes of phraseology diversify those words which answer the most exactly to one another in different languages; and although translations even under this disadvantage are sufficient to give every necessary information to those who are incapable of reading the original, yet we have experience, in reading all ancient authors, that the delicacy of a sentiment and the peculiar manner of an action may be so far lost by the words used in a translation, that there is no way of answering objections grounded upon the mode of exhibiting the sentiment or action, but by having recourse to the original.

3. A close attention to the whole contexture of the narration.—Those who are forward to make objections, are not disposed to compare the different parts of the narration, because it is not their business to find an answer. They choose rather to lay hold of particular expressions, and to give them the most exceptionable form, by

presenting them in a detailed view. The beautiful simplicity of Scripture leaves it very much exposed to this kind of objections.—When all the circumstances of a story are artfully arranged, so as to have a visible reference to one another, the manifest unfairness of attempting to present a part of the story disjointed from the rest, betrays the design of a person who makes such an attempt. But when the circumstances are spread carelessly through the whole narration, inserted by the historian as they occurred to his observation or his recollection, without his seeming desirous to prepossess the readers with an opinion that the story is true, or aware that any objection could be raised to it in this natural manner, which is the manner of truth and the manner of Scripture, it is easy to raise a variety of plausible objections; and a connected view of the whole is necessary in order to discern the futility of them.

From these three sources answers may be drawn to all the objections that have ever been made to the literal sense of the miracles of Jesus. To show their utility, I shall give a specimen of the application of them to some of the objections which Mr. Woolston has urged against three of the miracles of our Lord; the cure of the paralytic in the second chapter of Mark, the turning of water into wine at Cana, in the second chapter of John, and the resurrection of Lazarus in the eleventh chapter.

“And again he entered into Capernaum, after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them. And they came unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.”*

Mr. Woolston says, in a mode of expression which he uses without any scruple, this is the most monstrously absurd, improbable, and incredible of any, according to the letter. If the people thronged so much that those who bore the paralytic could not get to the door, why did not they wait till the crowd was dismissed, rather than heave up the sick man to the top of the house with ropes and ladders, break up tiles, spars, and rafters, and make a hole large enough for the man and his bed to be let through to the injury of the house, and the danger and annoyance of those who were within? A slight attention to the ordinary style of architecture in Judea, and to the words of the original, removes every appearance of absurdity in the narration. The houses in Judea were seldom more than two stories high, and the roofs were always flat, with a battlement or parapet round the edges, so that there was no danger in walking or pitching a tent, as was often done upon the roof. There was a stair within the house, which led to a door that lay flat when it was not opened, forming to all appearance a part of the roof, and was secured by a lock or bolt on the inside, to prevent its being readily opened by thieves. By this door the inhabitants of the house could easily get to the roof, and

* Mark ii. 1—4.

there was often a fixed stair leading to it from the outside, or where that was wanting, a short ladder was occasionally applied. Supposing then, the house mentioned by Mark to have been built after this common fashion; the court before it so full, that it was not possible to get near the door of the house; the people so throng, and so earnest in listening, that it was vain to think of their giving place to any one; in this situation, the four persons who carried the palsied man upon a little couch, κλινιδιον, think of going round to another part of the house, at which by a stair or ladder they easily reach the roof. They find the door laying flat, and the word ἐξουζῆαυτες implies that some force was necessary to break it open. That force might have disturbed the family had they been quiet. But at present they are too much engaged to attend to it, or their knowledge of the purpose for which the force was used, prevents them from giving any interruption. The door being made to allow persons to come out upon the roof, and the couch being a κλινιδιον,* it would not be difficult for four men to let down the couch by the stair on the inside, two of them going before to receive it out of the hands of the others. After the couch is thus brought into the room where Jesus was, in the only method by which access could be found to him, he rewards the faith of the sick man by performing, in presence of his enemies, several of whom appear to have mingled with the multitude, an instantaneous and wonderful cure. The palsy is a disease seldom completely, never suddenly removed. The extreme degree in which it affected this man was known to the four who carried him, to the multitude in the midst of whom he was laid, to all the inhabitants of Capernaum. Yet by a word from the mouth of Jesus, he is enabled to rise up and carry his couch. Judge from this simple exposition, whether the narrative of Mark deserves to be called monstrously absurd and incredible.

The turning of water into wine is recorded in the second chapter of John. The only objection to this miracle which merits consideration, is the offence conceived by Mr. Woolsten at the expression which our Lord uses to his mother. And I doubt not that it sounds harsh in the ears of every English reader. "When they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, they have no wine; Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come." Here an analysis of the words in the original appears to me to afford a satisfying answer to the objection. I need scarcely remark, that γυνή is the word by which women of the highest rank were addressed in ancient times by men of the most polished manners, when they wished to show them every mark of respect. It is used by Jesus, when with filial affection, in his dying moments, he provides every soothing attention for his mother. The phrase τι ἐμοὶ καὶ σοὶ occurs in some place of the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, and also in the New Testament. It is uniformly rendered "What have I to do with thee?" and seems to mark a check, a slight reprimand, a degree of displeasure. It was not unnatural for our translators to give the Greek phrase the same sense here; and many commentators understand our Lord as checking his mother for directing him in the exercise of his divine power. I do not think that such a check would have

* Luke v. 19, 24.

been inconsistent with that tender concern for his mother which our Lord showed upon the cross. It became him who was endowed with the Spirit without measure, to be led by that Spirit in the discharge of his public office, and not to commit himself to the narrow conceptions of any of the children of men. I do not therefore find fault with those who understand Jesus as saying, the time of attesting my commission by miracles is not come, and I cannot receive directions from you when it should begin. This may be the meaning of the words. But as they will easily bear another translation, perfectly consistent with the meekness and gentleness of Christ, I am inclined to prefer it. "What is that to thee and me? The want of wine is a matter that concerns the master of the feast. But it need not distress you; and my friends cannot accuse me of unkindness in withholding an exercise of my power, that may be convenient for them, for I have yet done no miracle, the season of my public manifestation not being come." We know that Jesus did not enter upon his ministry till after John was cast into prison. We find John, in the next chapter, baptizing near Salim, and this is called the beginning of miracles. According to this translation, every appearance of harshness is avoided, and the whole story hangs perfectly together. You will observe, Mary was so far from being offended at the supposed harshness of the answer, or conceiving it to be a refusal, that she says to the servants, "Whatever he saith unto you, do it:" and our Lord's doing the miracle after this answer, is a beautiful instance of his attention to his mother. Although his friends had no reason to expect an interposition of his power, because his hour was not come, yet, in compliance with her desire, he supplies plentifully what is wanting.

To the resurrection of Lazarus, in the eleventh chapter of John. Mr. Woolston objects, that the person raised was not a man of eminence sufficient to draw attention—that he gives no account of what he saw in the separate state—that it was absurd in Jesus to call with a loud voice to a dead man—that Lazarus having his head bound is suspicious—and that the whole is a romantic story. Now the answer to all this is to be drawn from the contexture of the narrative, in which, beautiful, simple, and tender as it is, there are interwoven such circumstances as can leave no doubt upon the mind of any person who admits the authenticity of this book, that the greatest of miracles was here really performed. Instead, therefore, of following the frivolous objections of Mr. Woolston one by one, I shall present you with a connected view of these circumstances, as a specimen of the manner in which the credibility of other miracles may be illustrated.

Jesus lingered in the place where he was, when he received the message from the sisters, till the time when, by the divine knowledge that he possessed, he said to the apostles, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth." After this, he had a long journey to Bethany; and it does not appear that he performed it hastily, for he learned, as he approached the village, that Lazarus had lain four days in the grave. He delayed so long, that the divine power, which he was to exert in the resurrection of Lazarus, might be magnified in the eyes of the spectators; and, at the same time, he provided an unquestionable testimony for the truth of the miracle, by arriving before the days of mourning were

expired. You will be sensible of the effect of this circumstance, if you attend for a moment to the manners of the Jews respecting funerals. One of the greatest calamities in human life, is the death of those persons whose society had been our comfort and joy. It has been the practice of all countries to testify the sense of this calamity by honours paid to the dead, and by expressions of grief on the part of the living. In eastern countries, where all the passions are strong, and agitate the frame more than in our northern climates, these expressions of grief were often exceedingly violent; and notwithstanding some wise prohibitions of the law of Moses, the mourning in the land of Judea was more expressive of anguish than that which we commonly see. The dead body was carried out to burial not long after the death. But the house in which the person had died, the furniture of the house, and all who had been in it at that time, became in the eye of the law unclean for seven days. During that time, the near relations of the deceased remained constantly in the house, unless when they went to the grave or sepulchre to mourn over the dead. They did not perform any of the ordinary business of life; they were not considered as in a proper condition for attending the service of the temple, and their neighbours and acquaintances, for these seven days, came to condole with them, bringing bread and wine and other victuals, as there was nothing in the house which could lawfully be used. Upon this charitable errand, a number of Jews, inhabitants of Jerusalem, had come out to Bethany, which was within two miles of the city, upon the day when Jesus arrived there; and thus, as we found the sisters brought out to the sepulchre one after another, by the most natural display of character, so here, without any appearance of a divine interposition, but merely by their following the dictates of good neighbourhood or of decency, the enemies of Jesus are gathered together to be the witnesses of this work. When the Jews saw Mary rise hastily and go out, after the private message which Martha brought her, knowing that she could not go any where but to the sepulchre, they naturally arose to follow her, that they might restrain the extravagance of her grief, and assist in composing her spirit and bringing her home. They found Jesus in the highway where Martha had first met him, groaning in spirit at the distress of the family, and soothing Mary's complaint by this kindly question, "Where have ye laid him?" a question which showed his readiness to take part in her sorrow by going with her to the house of the dead. The Jews answered his question, "Lord, come and see;" and Jesus suffers himself to be led by them, that they might see there was no preparation for the work he was about to perform, when he stepped out of the highway along with them, and allowed them to reach the sepulchre before him. His tears draw the attention of the crowd as he approaches the place; and the Evangelist has presented to us, in their different remarks, that variety of character which we discover in every multitude. The candid and feeling admired this testimony of his affection for Lazarus, "Behold how he loved him!" Others, who pretended to more sagacity, argued from the grief of Jesus, that, in the death of Lazarus, he had met with a disappointment which he would have prevented if he could. Jesus, without making any reply to either remark, arrives at the grave. John, who wrote his Gospel

at a distance from Jerusalem, for the benefit of those who were strangers to Jewish manners, has given a short description of the grave, which we must carry along with us. The Jews, especially persons of distinction, were generally laid, not in such graves as we commonly see, but in caves hewn in the rocks, with which the land of Judea abounded. Sometimes the sepulchre was in part above the ground, having a door, like that in which our Lord lay. Sometimes it was altogether below ground, having an aperture from which a stair led down to the bottom, and this aperture covered with a stone, except when the sepulchre was to be opened. The body, swathed in linen, with the feet and hands tightly bound, and the whole face covered by a napkin, was laid, not in a coffin, but in a niche or cell of the sepulchre. As the Jews, at the command of Jesus, were attempting to take away the stone, Martha seems to stagger in the faith which she had formerly expressed. "Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been *dead* four days," τετραςταυος γαρ εστι. The word means that he has been four days in some particular condition, without expressing what condition is meant. Now, his present condition is, being in the cave. It was mentioned before, that he had been there four days, and therefore our translators should have inserted in italics the word *buried*, not the word *dead*. Jesus revives the faith of Martha; and as soon as the stone is removed, he lifts up his eyes to heaven, and thanks the Father for having heard him. His enemies said, that he did his mighty works by the assistance of the devil. Here, in the act of performing the greatest of them, he prays with perfect assurance of being heard, ascribes the honour to God, and takes to himself the name of the messenger of heaven. Think of the suspense and earnest attention of the multitude, while, after the sepulchre is opened, Jesus is uttering this solemn prayer. How would the suspense be increased, when Jesus, to show the whole multitude that the resurrection of Lazarus was his deed, calls with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" And what would be their astonishment when they saw this command instantly obeyed; the man who had lain four days in the sepulchre, sliding his limbs down from the cell, and standing before it upright! The bandages prevent him from moving forward. But Jesus, by ordering the Jews to loose him, gives them a nearer opportunity of examining this wonderful sight, and of deriving, from the dress of his body, from the state of the grave clothes, from the manner in which the napkin smothered his face, various convincing proofs, that the man whom they now saw and touched alive, had been truly numbered among the dead.

The contexture of this narration is such as to efface from our minds every objection against the consistency of it; and the greatness of the miracle is obvious. We behold in this work the Lord of Life. None can restore a man who had seen corruption, but He who in the beginning created him. Jesus gives us here a sample of the general resurrection, and a sensible sign that he is able to deliver from the second death. This is the meaning of that expression, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die," ον μη αποθανη εις τον αιωνα, *i. e.* shall not die for ever. Natural death is the separation of soul and body; eternal death is the loss, the degradation, and final wretchedness of the soul. Both are the wages of sin, and Jesus delivers from

the first, which is visible, as a pledge of his being able to deliver, in due time, those who live and believe in him, from the second also. The miracle is in this way stated by himself, both as a confirmation of his mission, and as an illustration of the great doctrine of his religion.

Before leaving the circumstances of the miracle I would observe, that however ably such objections as I have mentioned may be answered, there is much caution to be used in stating them to a Christian assembly. It is very improper to communicate to the people all the extravagant frivolous conceits that have been broached by the enemies of Christianity. The objection may remain with them after they have forgotten the answer; and their faith may be shaken by finding that it has received so many attacks. It becomes the ministers of religion indeed, to possess their minds with a profound knowledge of the evidences of Christianity, and of the answers that may be made to objections. But out of this store-house they should bring forth to the people a clear unembarrassed view of every subject upon which they speak, so as to create no doubt or suspicion in those who hear them, but to give their faith that stability which is always connected with distinct apprehension.

III. It remains to say a few words upon the effects which this miracle produced. Some of the persons who had come to comfort Mary, when they saw "the things which Jesus did, believed on him." It was the conclusion of right reason, that a man who, in the sight of a multitude, exerted, without preparation, a power to which no human exertion deserves to be compared, was a messenger of heaven. It was the conclusion of an enlightened and unprejudiced Jew, that this extraordinary person, appearing in the land of Judea, was the Messiah, whose coming was to be distinguished by signs and wonders. The chosen people of God, who "waited for the consolation of Israel," found in this miracle the most striking marks of him that should come. The conclusion seems to arise naturally out of the premises. Yet it was not drawn by all. Many believed, "but some went their ways to the Pharisees and told them what things Jesus had done." They knew the enmity which these leading men entertained against him. They were afraid of incurring their anger, by appearing to be his disciples; they hoped to obtain their favour by informing against him; and, sacrificing their conviction to this fear and this hope, they go from the sepulchre of Lazarus, where with astonishment they had seen the power of Jesus, to inflame the minds of his enemies by a recital of the deed. And what do these enemies do? They could not entertain a doubt of the fact. It was told them by witnesses who had no interest in forging or exaggerating miracles ascribed to Jesus. The place was at hand; inquiry was easy; and the imposture, had there been any, could not have remained hidden at Jerusalem for a day. The Pharisees, therefore, in their deliberations, proceed upon the fact as undeniable. "This man doth many miracles." But, from mistaken views of political expediency, the result of their deliberation is, "They take counsel together to put him to death."

There is thus furnished a satisfactory answer to a question that has often been asked, If Jesus really did such miracles, how is it pos-

sible that any who saw them could remain in unbelief? Many, we are told, did believe; and here is a view of the motives which indisposed others for attending to the evidence which was exhibited to them, and even determined them to reject it. You cannot be surprised at the influence which such motives exerted at that time, because the like influence of similar motives is a matter of daily observation. The evidence upon which we embrace Christianity is not the same which the Jews had; but it is sufficient. All the parts of it have been fully illustrated; every objection has received an apposite answer; the gainsayers have been driven out of every hold which they have tried to occupy; the wisest and most enlightened men in every age have admitted the evidence, and "set to their seal that God is true." Yet it is rejected by many. Pride, false hopes, or evil passions, detain them in infidelity. They ask for more evidence. They say they suspect collusion, enthusiasm, credulity. But the example of those Jews, who went their ways to the Pharisees, may satisfy you that there is no defect in the evidence, and that there is the most literal truth in our Lord's declaration, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

The different effects which the same religious truths and the same religious advantages produce upon different persons, afford one instance of a state of trial. God is now proving the hearts of the children of men, drawing them to himself by persuasion, by that moral evidence which is enough to satisfy, not to overpower. Faith in this way becomes a moral virtue. A trial is taken of the goodness and honesty of the heart. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" The same seed of the word is scattered by the blessed sower in various soils, and the quality of the soil is left to appear by the produce.

Pierce's Commentary.

CHAPTER VI.

EXTERNAL EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY—PROPHECY.

HAD Jesus appeared only as a messenger of heaven, the points already considered might have finished the defence of Christianity, because we should have been entitled to say that miracles such as those recorded in the Gospel, transmitted upon so unexceptionable a testimony, and wrought in support of a doctrine so worthy of God, are the complete credentials of a divine mission. But the nature of that claim which is made in the Gospel requires a further defence: for it is not barely said that Jesus was a messenger from heaven, but it is said that he was the Messiah of the Jews, “the prophet that should come into the world.”* John, his forerunner, marked him out as the Christ.† He himself, in his discourses with the Jews, often referred to their books, which he said wrote of him.‡ Before his ascension, he expounded to his disciples in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself.§ They went forth after his death declaring that they said none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come;|| and in all their discourses and writings they held forth the Gospel as the end of the law, the fulfilment of the covenant with Abraham, the performance of the mercy promised to the fathers.

If the Gospel be a divine revelation, these allegations must be true; for it is impossible that a messenger from heaven can advance a false claim. Although, therefore, the nature of the doctrine, and the confirmation which it receives from miracles, might have been sufficient to establish our faith, had no such claim been made; yet, as Jesus has chosen to call himself the Messiah of the Jews, it is incumbent upon Christians to examine the correspondence between that system contained in the books of the Jews, and that contained in the New Testament; and their faith does not rest upon a solid foundation, unless they can satisfy their minds that the characters of the Jewish Messiah belong to Jesus. It is to be presumed that he had wise reasons for taking to himself this name, and that the faith of his disciples will be very much strengthened by tracing the connection between the two dispensations. But the nature and force of the argument from prophecy will unfold itself in the progress of the investigation; and it is better to begin with attending to the facts upon which the

* John iv. 26; vi. 14.

† John i. 29—31.

‡ John v. 39, 46.

§ Luke xxiv. 27.

|| Acts xxvi. 22.

argument rests, and the steps which lead to the conclusion, than to form premature conceptions of the amount of this part of the evidence for Christianity.

SECTION I.

IN every point of investigation, it is of great importance to ascertain precisely the point from which you set out, that there may be no danger of confounding the points that are assumed, with those that are to be proven. There is much reason for making this remark in entering upon the subject which we are now to investigate, because attempts have been made to render it confused and inextricable, by misstating the manner in which the investigation ought to proceed. Mr. Gibbon, speaking of that argument from prophecy, which often occurs in the apologies of the primitive Christians, calls it an argument beneath the notice of philosophers. "It might serve," he says, "to edify a Christian, or to convert a Jew, since both the one and the other acknowledge the authority of the prophets, and both are obliged with devout reverence to search for their sense and accomplishment. But this mode of persuasion loses much of its weight and influence, when it is addressed to those who neither understand nor respect the Mosaic dispensation, or the prophetic spirit."* Mr. Gibbon learned to use this supereilious inaccurate language from Mr. Collins, an author of whom I shall have occasion to speak fully before I finish the discussion of this subject, and who lays it down as the fundamental position of his book, that Christianity is founded upon Judaism, and from thence infers that the Gentiles ought regularly to be converted to Judaism before they can become Christians. The object of the inference is manifest. It is to us, in these later ages, a much shorter process to attain a conviction of the truth of Christianity, than to attain, without the assistance of the Gospel, a conviction of the divine origin of Judaism: and, therefore, if it be necessary that we become converts to Judaism before we become Christians, the evidence of our religion is involved in numberless difficulties, and the field of objection is so much extended, that the adversaries of our faith may hope to persuade the generality of mankind that the subject is too intricate for their understanding. The design is manifest; but nothing can be more loose or fallacious than the statement which is employed to accomplish this design. In order to perceive this you need only attend to the difference between a Jew and a Gentile in the conduct of this investigation. A Jew who respects the Mosaic dispensation and the prophetic spirit, looks for the fulfilment of those prophecies which appear to him to be contained in his sacred books, and when any person declares that these prophecies are fulfilled in him, the Jew is led by that respect to compare the circumstances in the appearance of that person with what he accounts the right interpretation of the prophecies, and to form his judgment whether they be fulfilled. A Gentile, to whom the divinity of the prophecies was formerly un-

* Gibbon's Roman History, chap. xv.

known, but who hears a person declaring that they are fulfilled in him, if he is disposed by other circumstances to pay any respect to what that person says, will be led by that respect to inquire after the books in which these prophecies are said to be contained, will compare the appearance of that person with what is written in these books, and will judge from this comparison how far they correspond. Both the Jew and the Gentile may be led by this comparison to a firm conviction that the messenger whose character and history they examine, is the person foretold in the prophecies. Yet the Jew set out with the belief that the prophecies are divine; the Gentile only attained that belief in the progress of the examination. It is not possible, then, that a previous belief of the divinity of the prophecies is necessary in order to judge of the fulfilment of them; for two men may form the same judgment in this matter, the one of whom from the beginning had that belief, and the other had it not.

The true point from which an investigation of the fulfilment of prophecy must commence, is this, that the books containing what is called the prophecy, existed a considerable time before the events which are said to be the fulfilment of it. I say, a considerable time, because the nearer that the first appearance of these books was to the event, it is the more possible that human sagacity may account for the coincidence, and the remoter the period is, to which their existence can be traced, that account becomes the more improbable. Let us place ourselves, then, in the situation of those Gentiles whom the first preachers of the Gospel addressed; let us suppose that we know no more about the books of the Jews than they might know, and let us consider how we may satisfy ourselves as to the preliminary point upon which the investigation must proceed.

The prophecies to which Jesus and his apostles refer, did not proceed from the hands of obscure individuals, and appear in that suspicious form which attends every prediction of an unknown date and a hidden origin. They were presented to the world in the public records of a nation; they are completely incorporated with these records, and they form part of a series of predictions which cannot be disjoined from the constitution and history of the state. This nation, however singular in its religious principles, and in what appeared to the world to be its political revolutions, was not unknown to its neighbours. By its geographical situation, it had a natural connection with the greatest empires of the world. War and commerce occasionally brought the flourishing kingdom of Judea into their view; and although repugnant in manners and in worship, they were witnesses of the existence and the peculiarities of this kingdom. The captivity, first of the ten tribes by Salmanazar, afterwards of the two tribes by Nebuchadnezzar, served still more to draw the attention of the world, many centuries before the birth of Christ, to the peculiarities of Jewish manners. And there was a circumstance in the return of the two tribes from captivity, which was to those who observed it in ancient times, and is to us at this day, a singular and unquestionable voucher of the early existence of their books. Nehemiah was appointed by the king of Persia to superintend the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. He had received much opposition in this work from Sanballat, the governor of Samaria, that district of Palestine

which the ten tribes had inhabited, and into which the king of Assyria had, at the time of their captivity, transplanted his own subjects. The work, however, was finished, and Nehemiah proceeded in making the regulations which appeared to him necessary for maintaining order, and the observance of the law of Moses amongst the multitude whom he had gathered into Jerusalem. Some of these regulations were not universally agreeable; and Manasseh, a son of the high priest, who had married a daughter of Sanballat, fled at the head of the malecontent Jews into Samaria. The Law of Moses was not acknowledged in Samaria, for the king of Assyria, after the first captivity, had sent a priest to instruct those whom he planted there, in the worship of the God of the country, and for some time they had offered sacrifices to idols in conjunction with the true God. But Manasseh, emulous of the Jews whom he had left, and considering the honour of a descendant of Aaron as concerned in the purity of worship which he established in his new residence, prevailed upon the inhabitants to put away their idols, built a temple to the God of Israel upon Mount Gerizim, and introduced a copy of the law of Moses, or the Pentateuch. He did not introduce any of the later books of the Old Testament, lest the Samaritans, observing the peculiar honours with which God had distinguished Jerusalem, "the place which he had chosen, to put his name there," should entertain less reverence for the temple of Gerizim. And as a farther mark of distinction, Manasseh had the book of the law written for the Samaritans, not in the Chaldee character, which Ezra had adopted in the copies of the law which he made for the Jews, to whom that language had become familiar during the captivity, but in the old Samaritan character. During the successive fortunes of the Jewish nation, the Samaritans continued to reside in their neighbourhood, worshipping the same God, and using the same law. But between the two nations there was that kind of antipathy, which, in religious differences, is often the more bitter, the less essential the disputed points are, and which, in this case, proceeded so far that the Jews and Samaritans not only held no communion in worship, but had "no dealings with one another."

Here then are two rival tribes stated in opposition and enmity five hundred years before Christ, yet acknowledging and preserving the same laws, as if appointed by Providence to watch over the corruptions which either might be disposed to introduce, and to transmit to the nations of the earth, pure and free from suspicion, those books in which Moses wrote of Jesus. The Samaritan Pentateuch is often quoted by the early fathers. After it had been unknown for a thousand years, it was found by the industry of some of those critics who lived at the beginning of the seventeenth century, amongst the remnant who still worship at Gerizim. Copies of it were brought into Europe, and the learned have now an opportunity of comparing the Samaritan text used by the followers of Manasseh, with the Hebrew or Chaldee text used by the Jews.

While this ancient schism thus furnished succeeding ages with jealous guardians of the Pentateuch, the existence and integrity of all their Scriptures were vouched by another event in the history of the Jews.

Alexander the Great, in the progress of his conquests, either visited the land of Judea, or received intelligence concerning the Jews. His inquisitive mind, which was no stranger to science, and which was not less intent upon great plans of commerce than of conquest, was probably struck with the peculiarities of this ancient people; and when he founded his city Alexandria, he invited many of the Jews to settle there. The privileges which he and his successors conferred upon them, and the advantages of that situation, multiplied the Jewish inhabitants of Alexandria; and the constant intercourse of trade obliged them to learn the Greek language, which the conquerors of Asia had introduced through all the extent of the Macedonian empire.—Retaining the religion and manners of Judea, but gradually forgetting the language of that country, they became desirous that their Scriptures, the canon of which was by this time complete, should be translated into Greek; and it was especially proper that there should be a translation of the Pentateuch for the use of the synagogue, where a portion of it was read every Sabbath-day. We have the best reason for saying that the translation of the Old Testament, which, from an account of the manner of its being made, probably in many points fabulous, has received the name of the Septuagint, was begun at Alexandria about two hundred and eighty years before Christ; and we cannot doubt that the whole of the Pentateuch was translated at once. Learned men have conjectured, indeed, from a difference of style, that the other parts of the Old Testament were translated by other hands. But it is very improbable that a work, so acceptable to the numerous and wealthy body of Jews who resided at Alexandria, would receive any long interruption after it was begun; and a subsequent event in the Jewish history appears to fix a time when a translation of the prophets would be demanded. About the middle of the second century before Christ, Antiochus Epiphanes, King of Syria, committed the most outrageous acts of wanton cruelty against the whole nation of the Jews; and as he contended with the King of Egypt for the conquest of Palestine, we may believe that the Jews of Alexandria shared the fate of their brethren, as far as the power of Antiochus could reach them. Amongst other edicts which he issued, he forbade any Jews to read the law of Moses in public. As the prohibition did not extend to the prophets, the Jews began at this time to substitute portions of the prophets instead of the law. After the heroical exploit of the Asmonæan family, the Maccabees had delivered their country from the tyranny of Antiochus, and restored the reading of the law, the prophets continued to be read also; and we know that before the days of our Saviour, reading both the law and the prophets was a stated part of the synagogue service. In this way the whole of the Septuagint translation came to be used in the churches of the Hellenistical Jews scattered through the Grecian cities; and we are told it was used in some of the synagogues of Judea.

When Rome, then, entered into an alliance with the princes of the Asmonæan line, who were at that time independent sovereigns, and when Judea, experiencing the same fate with the other allies of that ambitious republic, was subdued by Pompey about sixty years before the birth of our Saviour, the books of the Jews were publicly read in a language which was then universal. The diffusion of the

Jews through all parts of the Roman empire, and the veneration in which they held their scriptures, conspired to assure the heathen that such books existed, and to spread some general knowledge of their contents: and even could we suppose it possible for a nation so zealous of the law, and so widely scattered as the Jews were, to enter into a concert for altering their scriptures, we must be sensible that insuperable difficulties were thrown in the way of such an attempt, by the animosity between the religious sects which at that time flourished in Judea. The Sadducees and the Pharisees differed upon essential points respecting the interpretation and extent of the law; they were rivals for reputation and influence; there were learned men upon both sides, and both acknowledged the authority of Moses; and thus, as the Samaritans and the Jews in ancient times were appointed of God to watch over the Pentateuch; so, in the ages immediately before our Saviour, the Pharisees and the Sadducees were faithful guardians of all the ancient scriptures.

Such is the amount of that testimony to the existence of their sacred books, long before the days of our Saviour, with which the Jews, a nation superstitiously attached to their law, widely spread, and strictly guarded, present them to the world; and to this testimony there are to be added the many internal marks of authenticity which these books exhibit to a discerning reader,—the agreement of the natural, the civil, and the religious history of the world, with those views which they present—the incidental mention that profane writers have made of Jewish customs and peculiarities, which is always strictly conformable to the contents of these books—the express reference to many of them that occurs in the New Testament, a reference which must have destroyed the credit of the Gospels and Epistles, if the books referred to had not been known to have a previous existence—and, lastly, the evidence of Josephus, the Jewish historian, a man of rank and of science, who may be considered as a contemporary of Jesus, and who has given in his works a catalogue of the Jewish books, not upon his own authority, but upon the authority and ancient conviction of his nation, a catalogue which agrees both in number and in description with the books of the Old Testament that we now receive. Even Daniel, the only writer of the Old Testament against the authenticity of whose book any special objections have been offered, is styled by Josephus a prophet, and is extolled as the greatest of the prophets; and his book is said by this respectable Jew to be a part of the canonical scriptures of his nation.*

It appears, from laying all these circumstances together, that as our Lord and his apostles had a title to assume in their addresses to the Gentiles, the previous existence of the Jewish scriptures as a fact generally and clearly known, so no doubt can be reasonably entertained of this fact, even in the distant age in which we live. I do not speak of these scriptures as a divine revelation; I abstract entirely from that sacred authority which the Christian religion communicates to them; I speak of them merely as an ancient book; and I say, that while there is no improbability in the most remote date which any part of this book claims, there is real satisfying evidence, to which no

* Joseph. lib. x. cap. 11, 12.

degree of scepticism can justify any man for refusing his assent, that all the parts had an existence, and might have been known in the world, some centuries before the Christian era.

Having thus satisfied our minds of the previous existence of those scriptures, to which Jesus appeals as containing characters of the Messiah which are fulfilled in him, it is natural, before we examine his appeal, to inquire whether the nation who have transmitted these scriptures, entertained any expectation of such a person. For although it be possible that they might be ignorant of the full meaning of the oracles committed to them, and that a great Prophet might explain to the nations of the earth that true sense which the keepers of these oracles did not understand, yet his appeal would be received with more attention, and even with a prejudice in its favour, if it accorded with the hopes of those who had the best access to know the grounds of it. Now, it is admitted upon all hands, that at the time of our Saviour's birth there was in the land of Judea the most earnest expectation, and the most assured hope, that an extraordinary personage, to whom the Jews gave the name of Messiah, was to arise. We read in the New Testament, that many looked for redemption in Jerusalem, and waited for the consolation of Israel; that when John appeared, all men mused in their hearts whether he was the Christ; and the priests and the Levites sent messages to ask him, Art thou that prophet? that the conclusion which the people drew from some of the first of our Lord's miracles was, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world;" and that the expectation of this person had spread to other countries; for wise men came from the east to Jerusalem, in search of him who was to be born King of the Jews.* You will not think it unfair reasoning to quote these passages from the New Testament in proof of the expectation of a Messiah; for it is impossible that the books which refer in such marked terms to a sentiment so universal and strong, could have been received by any inhabitant of Judea, if that sentiment had no existence; and the inference which we are thus entitled to draw from the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, is confirmed in every way that the nature of the case admits of, by historians who write of these times, by the books of the ancient Jews, and the sentiments of the modern. Josephus, Suetonius, and Tacitus, although desirous to flatter the Roman emperor Vespasian, by applying the prophecies to him, yet unite in attesting the expectation which these prophecies had raised. Josephus says, "That which chiefly excited the Jews to war, was an ambiguous prophecy found in the sacred books, that at that time some one within their country should arise, that should obtain the empire of the world. For this they had received by tradition, that it was spoken of one of their nation, and many wise men were deceived with the interpretation. But, in truth, Vespasian's empire was designed in this prophecy, who was created emperor in Judea."† Josephus, although he affects in this place, (he speaks otherwise elsewhere,) to condemn that interpretation of the prophecy which led the Jews to expect a Messiah, yet acknowledges that this expectation was general, derived from the prophecies, and

* Luke ii. and iii; John i. and vi; Matt. ii.

† Jos. Hist. vi. 31.

entertained by many of the wise. Suetonius says, “Percrebuerat oriente toto vetus et constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut eo tempore Judæâ profecti rerum potirentur. Id de imperatore Romano, quantum postea eventu patuit, prædictum, Judæi ad se trahentes, rebellârunt.”*—Tacitus says, “Pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis sacerdotum libris contineri, eo ipso tempore fore, ut valesceret Oriens, profectique Judæa rerum potirentur. Quæ ambages Vespasianum ac Titum prædixerant. Sed vulgus, more humanæ cupidinis, sibi tantam factorum magnitudinem interpretati, ne adversis quidem ad vera mutabantur.”† Both historians, with that very *cupido* which they charge upon the Jews, apply the prophecy to a Roman emperor; an application which, at the time, was most unnatural, and which the event has clearly shown to be false. But both bear witness to the existence and antiquity of the prophecy, and to the universality and strength of the expectation grounded upon it. The oldest Rabbinical books extant, are the Targum of Onkelos on the Pentateuch, and the Targum of Jonathan on the Prophets; Targums, *i. e.* interpretations or paraphrases of the books of the Old Testament, composed for the instruction of the people, and used in the synagogues. There are many more modern Targums. But these two, Onkelos and Jonathan, are said by the Jews to have been written before or about the time of our Saviour, and they appear to be collections from more ancient books. They continued always in the hands of the Jews; they were not known to the Christians till a few centuries ago, yet they uniformly bear testimony to the national expectation of a Messiah, and mark out the prophecies which had produced that expectation. Even the Samaritans, who had only the Pentateuch, entertained the same expectation with the Jews. “I know,” said the Samaritan woman, in the Gospel of John, “that Messiah cometh. When he is come, he will tell us all things.”‡ And it deserves to be mentioned, that those learned men, who, in the beginning of the 17th century, introduced the Samaritan Pentateuch into Europe, obtained also from the remnant which still worships upon Mount Gerizim, a declaration of their faith concerning the Messiah. “You would know,” they say, in a letter which is extant, “whether the Messiah be come, and whether it be he that is promised in our law as the Shiloh. Know that the Messiah is not yet risen. But he shall rise, and his name shall be Hathab.” It is well known that the modern Jews still retain hopes that the Messiah will come. They have devised various schemes to account for his delay, and to elude the argument which we draw from the application of the prophecies to Jesus. But even their modern doctors declare, that he who believes the law of Moses should believe the coming of the Messiah; for the law commands us to believe in the prophets, and the prophets foretell his coming.

This much, then, we have gained by attending to the sentiments of the Jews—satisfying evidence that it was not an invention of our Lord and his apostles, to say, that Moses wrote of the Messiah; that Abraham rejoiced to see his day; that David, being a prophet, foresaw him in spirit; and that all the prophets, from Samuel, foretold of his

* Suet. Vespas. vi. 8.

† Tacit. Hist. lib. v. 9.

‡ John iv. 25.

days. The Jews said the same thing, and looked for the fulfilment of the promises made to their fathers. How ancient this expectation was, we cannot say, because, except the scriptures of the Old Testament, we have no Jewish books of unquestionable authority older than the days of our Saviour. But as it is clear that the expectation was not at that time new, as the first of the Jewish books extant declare, that all the prophets, from Moses to Malachi, prophesied only of the Messiah, and abound with explications of particular predictions, and as the most ancient prayers of the people in their synagogues adopt these explications, speaking of the Messiah under the names and characters ascribed to him in the predictions, it does not seem to admit of a doubt, that the hope of the Messiah was, in all ages among the Jews, the received national interpretation of those predictions in which they gloried.

The matter, then, is brought to a short issue. Certain books existed some centuries before the birth of Jesus, which raised in the nation that kept them a general expectation of an extraordinary personage. Jesus appeared in Judea, claiming to be that personage. The people in whose possession the books had always remained, are bound by their national expectations to examine his claim. The curiosity of the other nations to whom this claim is made known, or to whom the person advancing it appears upon other accounts respectable, is excited by the coincidence between the claim, and the expectations of that people upon whose ancient books it is founded: and thus both Jews and Gentiles, without any previous agreement in religious opinions, are called to attend to the same object, and one point is submitted to their examination: Whether the predictions concerning the Jewish Messiah apply to the circumstances in the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth.

SECTION II.

THE obvious method of proving that Jesus is the Messiah of the Jews, is to compare the predictions in their scriptures with the circumstances of his appearance. It is impossible, in any other way, to attain a conviction of the justness of his claim to that character; and it is clear, that if his claim be well founded, this method will be sufficient to ascertain it. This is the method which our Lord prescribed to the Jews. "Search the Scriptures, for these are they which testify of me." It is the method which he employed when, before his ascension, "he expounded to his disciples the things which were written concerning him in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms." It is the method by which Philip converted the minister of the Queen of Ethiopia, when he began at the 53d chapter of Isaiah, and preached to him Jesus. And it is the method which is continually recurring in the discourses and writings of the apostles.

A person who had no previous information upon the subject, would be obliged, in following this method, to mark, as he read through the Scriptures of the Old Testament, those passages which to him appeared to point to an extraordinary person; and then he would

either apply every one singly, or all of them collectively to Jesus, in order to judge how far they were fulfilled in him. But we are provided with much assistance in this examination. We are directed, in our search of the Old Testament, by the passages which our Lord and his apostles have quoted, by the knowledge which men versant in Jewish learning have diffused of the predictions marked in the Jewish Targums, and by the labours of the ancient apologists for Christianity, and of many divines since the Reformation, and more especially since the beginning of the last century, who, with very sound critical talents, and much historical information, have devoted themselves to the elucidation of this subject. There is no reason why we should not avail ourselves of these helps. They abridge the labour of investigation; but they do not necessarily bias our judgments. We may examine a prophecy which is pointed out to us, as strictly as if we ourselves had discovered it to be a prophecy. We may even indulge a certain degree of jealousy with regard to all the prophecies which are suggested by the friends of Christianity, and may fortify our minds with the resolution that nothing but the most marked and striking correspondence shall overcome this jealousy. It is right for you to employ every fair precaution against being deceived; and then take into your hands any of those books which serve as an index to the predictions in the Old Testament respecting the Messiah. You have an excellent index in Clarke's *Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion*, which is, upon the whole, one of the best elementary books for a student in divinity, and which is rendered peculiarly useful with regard to the prophecies, by a part of Dr. Clarke's character that appears in all his theological writings—an intimate profound knowledge of Scripture, and a faculty of bringing together, and arranging in the most lucid order all the texts which relate to a subject. You have another index in Bishop Chandler's *Defence of Christianity*. Sherlock, Newton, Jortin, Hurd, Halifax, Bagot, Macknight, and other divines, have both given a full explication of some particular predictions, and directed to the solution of many others. The comparison of the predictions in the Old Testament respecting the Messiah, with the facts recorded in the New, is one of the most essential parts of the education of a student in divinity. Other Christians may not have leisure for such an employment. But it is expected from your profession, that you know the occasions upon which the predictions were given, and that you are able to defend the received interpretations of them, and to state the order in which they succeeded one another, and the manner in which they were fulfilled. And if you either bring to this inquiry critical sagacity, and historical information of your own, or avail yourselves judiciously of the labours of others, you will attain an enlightened and firm conviction that Jesus is not only a messenger from heaven, but the Messiah of the Jews.

It is impossible for me to lead you through all the particulars of this investigation. But I shall mention, in a few words, the result to which men of the soundest judgment have been conducted, and which they have rendered it easy for us to teach; and then I shall give you a specimen of the exact fulfilment of Jewish prophecy in Jesus.

Moses, by whom the most ancient predictions were compiled, lived a thousand years before Malachi; and Malachi lived after the Jews

had returned from their captivity, above four hundred years before the birth of our Saviour. During the long period that intervened between the earliest and the latest prophets, there are scattered through the books of the Old Testament predictions of a dispensation of Providence, to be executed in a future time by an extraordinary personage. And all these predictions are found to apply to the history of Jesus of Nazareth. Although the predictions which point through such a length of time to one dispensation, differ widely from one another in clearness and imagery, not one of them is inconsistent with the facts recorded in the gospel. By the help of that interpretation which the event gives to the prophecy, we can see an uniformity and continuity in the scheme. The more general expressions of the ancient prophets, and the more minute descriptions of the latter, illustrate one another. Every prediction appears to stand in its proper place, and every clause assumes importance and significance.

There are two circumstances which every false prophet is careful to avoid, or at least to express in ambiguous terms, but which were precisely marked, and literally accomplished with regard to the Messiah. The circumstances are, time and place. It was foretold in a succession of limiting prophecies, that that seed of the woman which was to bruise the head of the serpent, should arise out of the family of Abraham, out of the children of Israel, out of the tribe of Judah, out of the house of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was born. It is said in the book of Chronicles, "Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler."* And to satisfy us that this prophecy was not exhausted by the rulers that had formerly come of Judah, we read in Micah, who lived in the reign of King Hezekiah, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."† Here is the place, an obscure village in Judea, so fixed by prophecy, seven hundred years before the event, that the ancient Jews expected the Messiah was to be born there; and some of the modern Jews have said that he was born before Bethlehem was desolated, and lies hidden in the ruins. The time is also fixed. Daniel numbered seventy weeks, that is according to the prophetic style, in which a day stands for a year, four hundred and ninety years, as the interval between the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem, and the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom.‡ This interpretation of the weeks of Daniel, which learned men have, I think, incontrovertibly established, is confirmed by other predictions still more clear, which declare that the extraordinary personage was to arise out of Judea, while it remained a distinct tribe, possessing some authority, and while its temple stood; and that he was to arise during the fourth kingdom, after the Romans became masters of the world. The four successive kingdoms are described in the interpretation of the vision in the seventh chapter of Daniel, and so described, that any person versant in history cannot mistake the Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman. The Romans had successively conquered the three other branches of the Macedonian empire. But

* Chron. v. 2.

† Micah v. 2.

‡ Daniel ix. 24, 25.

Egypt still existed as an independent kingdom, till the unfortunate Cleopatra ended her days at the battle of Actium, thirty years before the birth of our Saviour; the next year Egypt was made tributary to Rome; and then, first, says the historian Dion Cassius, did Cæsar alone possess all power. The city and temple of Jerusalem were destroyed, and the constitution of the Jewish state annihilated about seventy years after the birth of our Saviour. Thus the establishment of the universal empire of Rome, and the desolation of Jerusalem, are two limits marked by ancient prophecy. The Messiah was to be born after the first, and before the last. They contain between them a space of about a hundred years, within which space the Messiah was to be born; but at such a distance from the last of the two limits, as to allow time for his preaching to the Jews, for his being rejected by them, and for their suffering upon account of that rejection; all which events were also foretold. Within the space of a hundred years the different divisions of Daniel's seventy weeks had their end; and within this space Jesus was born. According to every method, then, in which the time of the Messiah's birth can be computed from ancient predictions, it was fulfilled in Jesus; and this fulfilment of the time brought about, by a wonderful concurrence of circumstances. a fulfilment with regard to the place also of the Messiah's birth. After the Romans, in the progress of their conquests, had subdued Syria, and the other parts of the Macedonian empire adjoining to Judea, that state, standing alone, could not long remain independent. Its form of government was for some time preserved by the indulgence of the Romans. But, about forty years before the birth of our Saviour, an act of the senate set aside the succession of the Asmonean princes, and conferred the crown of Judea upon Herod the Great. Although Herod was king of Judea, he held his kingdom as a prince dependent upon Rome; and, in token of his vassalage, an order was issued by Augustus, before his death, that there should be a general enrolment of the inhabitants of Palestine; that is, the Roman census, by which the state acquired a knowledge of the numbers, the wealth, and the condition of its subjects, was extended to this appendage of the Roman empire. In conformity to the Jewish method of classing the people by tribes and families, every inhabitant of Palestine was ordered to have his name enrolled, not in the city where he happened to reside, but in that to which the founder of his house had belonged, and which, in the language of the Jews, was the city of his people. By this order, which was totally independent of the will of Joseph and Mary, and which involved in it a decree of the Roman emperor then for the first time issued concerning Judea, and a resolution of the king of Judea to adopt a particular mode of executing that decree. Joseph and Mary are brought from a distant corner of Palestine to Bethlehem. They are brought at a time when Mary would not have chosen such a journey; and Jesus, to their great inconvenience and distress, is born in a stable, and laid in a manger. It is not easy for any person who attends to these circumstances, to refrain from acknowledging the hand of Providence, connecting the time and the place of the birth of Jesus, so as that, without the possibility of human preparation, they should together fulfil the words of ancient prophets.

I have selected these two necessary accompaniments of every action, because it was possible, within a short compass, to give you a striking view of the coincidence between the prediction and the event. But the same coincidence extends through a multitude of circumstances, which in the prophecies appear minute, unrelated, and sometimes contradictory, and which cannot be applied to any one person who ever lived upon earth, except to Jesus of Nazareth, in whom they are united with perfect harmony, so that every one has a meaning, and all together form a consistent whole.

It would seem, then, that we are fully warranted in saying that the circumstances in the appearance of Jesus correspond to the predictions of the Old Testament respecting the Messiah of the Jews, and that the presumptive and the direct proof of his being a messenger of heaven, are entitled to all the support, which they can derive from the justness of his claim to the character of Messiah.

SECTION III.

BUT the adversaries of Christianity do not allow us so readily to draw this conclusion : And there are objections to the argument from prophecy, the proper answer to which well deserves your study. These objections were brought forward, and stated with much art and plausibility, in a book entitled, *Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*, written after the beginning of the last century, by Mr. Collins. Bishop Chandler's *Defence of Christianity*, from the prophecies of the Old Testament, was an answer to this book : and Mr. Collins published a reply, entitled, *the Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered*. Bishop Sherlock in his discourses on Prophecy, Warburton in his *Divine Legation of Moses*, and many modern divines, have combated with sound learning and argument the positions of Mr. Collins ; so that any student who applies to this important subject, may receive very able assistance in forming his judgment.

I shall state to you the objections, with the answers. The position of Mr. Collins' book is this : Christianity is founded on Judaism. Our Lord and his apostles prove Christianity from the Old Testament. If the proofs which they draw from thence are valid, Christianity is true : if they are not valid, Christianity is false. But all the prophecies of the Old Testament are applicable to Christ only in a secondary, typical, allegorical sense. Such a sense, being fanatical and chimerical, cannot be admitted according to the scholastic rules of interpretation. And thus Christianity, deriving no real support from Judaism upon which it is professedly grounded, must be false.

To this artful mis-statement of the subject, we have two answers.

The first is, that there are in the Old Testament direct prophecies of the Messiah, which, not in a secondary, but in their primary sense, apply to Jesus of Nazareth. There is in the Pentateuch a promise of a prophet to be raised up from amongst the Jews like unto Moses.* But none in all the succession of Jewish prophets was like him in the

* Deut. xviii. 15. 18.

free intercourse which he had with the Almighty, the importance of the commission which he bore, and the signs which he did. And, therefore, that succession not only kept alive the expectation, but was itself a pledge of the great prophet that should come. The writings of the succession of prophets are full of predictions concerning a new dispensation more glorious, more general, more spiritual than the Jewish economy, when “the sons of the stranger should join themselves to the Lord;” when “his house should be an house of prayer for all people;” when “the gods of the earth should be famished,” no more offerings being presented to them, and “every one from his place,” not at Jerusalem, but in his ordinary residence, “should worship Jehovah.” “Behold the days come, saith the Lord,” by Jeremiah, who lived in the time of the captivity, “that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”* It is further to be remarked, that the prophecy of this new spiritual dispensation is connected throughout the Old Testament with the mention of a person by whom the dispensation was to be introduced. If it is called a covenant, we read of the Messenger of the Covenant. If it is called a kingdom, set up by the God of heaven, which should never be destroyed, we read of a chief ruler to come out of Judah, of the Prince of Peace who was to sit on the throne of his father David, to establish it with justice and judgment for ever; of one like the Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven, to whom is given an universal and everlasting dominion. If the new dispensation is represented as a more perfect mode of instruction, we read of a prophet upon whom should rest the spirit of wisdom and understanding. If it is styled the deliverance of captives, there is also a redeemer; or victory, there is also a leader; or a sacrifice, there is also an everlasting priest. The intimations of this extraordinary personage, so closely connected with the new dispensation, became more clear and pointed as the time of his coming approached: and there are predictions in Malachi and the later prophets, which in their direct primary sense can belong to no other but the Messiah. “Behold,” says God, by Malachi, “I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me; and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple; even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in.” And again, “Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”† Even Grotius, whose principle it was, in his exposition of the Old Testament, to seek for the primary sense of the prophecies in the Jewish affairs which were immediately under the eye of the prophet, and to consider their application to Jesus as a secondary sense, and who has often been misled by this principle into very forced interpretations, has not been able to assign any other

* Jer. xxxi. 31—33.

† Malachi iii. 1, 4, 5.

meaning to these prophecies, with which the old Testament concludes, and with a repetition of which Mark begins his Gospel, than that Malachi, with whom the prophetic spirit ceased, gave notice that it should be resumed in John the forerunner of the Messiah, who in the spirit and the power of Elias, should prepare the way before the messenger of the covenant.

The first answer then to Mr. Collins is, that there are in the Old Testament direct prophecies of the dispensation of the Gospel, and of the Messiah.

The second answer is, that prophecies applicable to Jesus only in a typical and secondary sense are not fanatical or unscholastic.

We are taught by the Apostle Paul to consider all the ceremonies of the law as types of the more perfect and spiritual dispensation of the Gospel. The meats, the drinks, the washings, the institution of the Levitical priesthood, the paschal lamb, and the other sacrifices, were figures for the time then present, shadows of good things to come, a rough draught, as the word type properly imports, of the blessings of that better covenant which the law announced. Many actions and incidents in the lives of eminent persons under the law are held forth as types of the Christ; and by the application which is made in the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles, of various passages in the Old Testament, we are led to consider many prophecies, which originally had, both in the intention of the speaker and in the sense of the hearers, a reference only to Jewish affairs, and were then interpreted by that reference, as receiving their full accomplishment in the events of the Gospel. This is what we mean by the double sense of prophecy. The seventy-second psalm is an example. It is the paternal blessing given by David in his dying moments to Solomon, when with the complacency of an affectionate father and a good prince, he looks forward to that happiness which his people were to enjoy under the peaceful reign of his son. But while he contemplates this great and pleasing object, he is led by the spirit to look beyond it, to that illustrious descendant whose birth he had been taught to expect,—that branch which in the latter days was to spring out of the root of Jesse. The two objects blend themselves together in his imagination; at least the words in which he pours forth his conceptions, although suggested by the promise concerning Solomon, are much too exalted when applied to the occurrences even of his distinguished reign, and were fulfilled only in the nature and the extent of the blessings conveyed by the Gospel. Had we no warrant from authority upon other accounts respectable, to bring this secondary sense out of some prophecies; or had we no prophecies of the Messiah in the Old Testament of another kind, it would be unfair and unscholastical reasoning to infer that Jesus is the Messiah, because some passages may be thus transferred to him. We rest the argument from prophecy upon those predictions which expressly point to the Messiah, and upon that authority which the miracles of Jesus and his apostles gave to them as interpreters of prophecy; and we say that when their interpretation of those prophecies which were originally applicable to other events, gives to every expression in them a natural and complete sense, and at the same time coincides with the spirit of those predictions concerning the Gospel which are direct, we have the best reason

for receiving this further meaning, not to the exclusion of the other, but as the full exposition of the words of the prophet.

There is nothing in the nature of prophecy, or the general use of language, inconsistent with this account of the matter. If you allow that prophecy is a thing possible, you must admit that "it came not by the will of man, but that holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Prophecy by its nature is distinguished from other kinds of discourse. At other times, men utter sentiments which they feel; they relate facts which they know; they reason according to the measure of their faculties. But when they prophesy, that is, when they declare, by the inspiration of God, events which are out of the reach of human foresight, they speak not of themselves; they are but the vehicles for conveying the mind of another Being; they pronounce the words which he puts into their mouth; and whether these words be intelligible or not, or what their full meaning may be, depends not upon them, but upon Him from whom the words proceed. It is thus clearly deducible from the nature of prophecy, that there might be in the predictions of the Old Testament, a further meaning than that which was distinctly presented to the minds of those who spake.— And we may conceive, that as the high priest Caiaphas was directed to the Jewish council to employ words which, although in his eyes they contained only a political advice, were really a prophecy of the benefits resulting from the death of Christ,* so the spirit of God might introduce into predictions, which to those who uttered them seemed to respect only the present fortune of their country, or the fate of some illustrious personage, expressions, in a certain sense indeed, applicable to them, but pointing to a more important event, and a more glorious personage, in whom it was to appear at a future period that they were literally fulfilled.

As there is nothing in the nature of prophecy inconsistent with that account of types and secondary senses which constitutes our second answer to the objection of Mr. Collins, so this account is supported by the general use of language. And any person versant in that use, will not be disposed to call the application of types and secondary prophecies unscholastic. The typical nature of the Jewish ritual accords with that most ancient method of conversing by actions, that kind of symbolical language, which is adopted in early times from the scantiness of words, which is retained in advanced periods of society, in order to give energy and beauty to speech, which abounds in the writings of the Jewish prophets, and appears to have been in familiar and universal use through all the regions adjoining to Judea. In like manner, prophecies which admit of two senses, one immediate and obvious, the other remote and hidden, are agreeable to that allegory which is only the symbolical language appearing in an extended discourse. Both sacred and profane poets afford beautiful examples of allegory. In the 14th Ode of the first book of Horace, the poet, under a concern for the safety of his friends at sea in a shattered bark, contrives at the same time to convey his apprehensions concerning the issue of the new civil war. There is a finished allegory, in the 80th Psalm. And Dr. Warburton has pointed out a prophecy in the two

* John. xi. 49.

first chapters of Joel, where the prophet, he says, in his prediction of an approaching ravage by locusts, foretells likewise, in the same words, a succeeding desolation by the Assyrian army. For, as some of the expressions mark death by insects, and others desolation by war, both senses must be admitted. Allegory abounds in all the moral writings of antiquity, and is employed at some times as an agreeable method of communicating knowledge, and at other times as a cover for that which was too refined for vulgar eyes. There is not any particular reason for saying that it was unworthy of God to accommodate the style of many of his prophecies to this universal use of allegory; because whenever the Almighty condescends to speak to us, whether he uses plain or figurative language, he must speak after the manner of men; and we are able to assign a most important purpose which was attained by those prophecies of a double sense, the interpretation of which, although very far from deserving the name of unscholastic, may be called allegorical. It pleased God, in the intermediate space between the first predictions of the Messiah and the fulfilment of them, to establish the Jewish economy, an institution singular in its nature, and limited in its extent. This intermediate institution being for many ages a theocracy, there arose a succession of prophets by whom the intercourse between the Almighty Sovereign and his people was maintained; and the whole administration of the affairs of the Jews was long conducted by the prophets. It was natural for this succession of prophecy to give some notice of the better covenant which was to be made; and accordingly, we can trace predictions of the Messiah from the books of Moses, till the cessation of the prophetic spirit in Malachi. The Holy Ghost, by whom the prophet spoke, could have rendered these notices of the spiritual and universal nature of the future dispensation clear and intelligible to every one who heard them. But, in this case, the intermediate preparatory dispensation would have been despised. The Jews comparing their burdensome ritual with the simplicity of Gospel worship,—their imperfect sacrifices with the efficacy of the great atonement,—their temporal rewards with the crown of glory laid up in heaven, would have thrown off the yoke which they were called to bear; and those rudiments by which the law was given to train their minds for the perfect instruction of the Gospel, would have been cast away as “beggary elements.” If the law served any purpose, it was necessary that it should be respected and observed so long as it was to subsist; and therefore it would have been inconsistent with the wisdom of Him from whom it proceeded, that it should impart such a degree of light as might have destroyed itself. Enough was to be declared to raise and cherish an expectation of that which was to come, but not enough to disparage the things that then were. This end is most perfectly attained by the types, and the prophecies of a double sense which are contained in the Old Testament. Both were so agreeable to the manners of the times, and both received such a degree of explication from the direct prophecies concerning the Messiah, that there was an universal apprehension of their further meaning. Yet their immediate importance preserved the respect which was due to the law; and when, in the end of the age of prophecy, predictions of the Messiah were given by different prophets which could not apply to any other person,

—these direct predictions were clothed in a figurative language, all the figures of which were borrowed from the law. The law, in this way, was still magnified; and as the child is kept under tutors and governors till the time appointed of the father, so says the apostle to the Galatians, the Jews were kept under the law, the guardians of the oracles of God,—the depositaries of the hopes of mankind, until the time came that the faith should be revealed.* When it was revealed, then the allegory received its interpretation; the significancy of the types, the reddition of the parables, the hidden meaning of the ancient prophecies, and the propriety of the figures in which the latter were clothed, all now stand forth to the admiration and conviction of the Christian world. What was a hyperbole in its application to Jewish affairs, becomes, says Dr. Warburton, plain speech, or an obvious metaphor, when transferred to the Gospel; and the Old Testament appears to have been, what St. Austin calls it, a continued prophecy of the New.

SECTION IV.

BEFORE I proceed to state the amount of the argument from prophecy, there is one other objection to that argument which requires to be mentioned. The objection arises from a kind of verbal criticism, but does not deserve upon that account to be dismissed as unimportant.

It was long ago observed, that many of the passages quoted from the Old Testament in the New, do not exactly agree with the text of our copies of the Old Testament. The apology commonly made for this difference was, that our Lord and his apostles did not quote from the Hebrew, but from the Septuagint translation, which was known and respected in Judea. But, upon accurate investigation, it was found that the quotations do not always correspond with the Septuagint; and that there are many which agree neither with the Septuagint nor with the Hebrew. It was insinuated, therefore, by the adversaries of Christianity, that our Lord and his apostles had not been scrupulous in their method of quoting the Old Testament; but wishing to ground Christianity upon Judaism, and finding it difficult to lay this foundation with the materials that existed, had accommodated the words of the Old Testament to their argument, and made the prophets say what it was necessary for the conclusiveness of that argument, they should seem to say. It appears at first sight very unlikely that our Lord and his apostles, who began the preaching of the gospel from Judea, would, in the hearing of the Jews, use such liberty with the scriptures which were publicly read in those very synagogues where they were thus misquoted. The detection of the fraud was easy, or rather unavoidable, and must have been ruinous to the cause of Christianity. But however improbable it may seem that our Lord and his apostles should be guilty of such a fraud, the fact is undeniable, that the quotations in the New Testament do not

* Gal. iv.

always agree with the books from which they are taken ; and it remains with the friends of Christianity to account for this fact. Many zealous Christians have thought it essential to the honour of that revelation granted to the Jews, to maintain the integrity of the original Hebrew text ; and even during the course of the last century, some men versant in Jewish learning argued most strenuously, that the Providence of God employed the vigilance of the Jewish nation, and certain precautions of the Jewish Rabbis to preserve the Hebrew text through all ages, from every degree of adulteration. Were this opinion sound, it does not appear to me that any satisfying account could be given of the difference between the Old Testament and the New, in those passages where the latter professes to quote the former. But as suspicions had been long entertained that there were variations in the Hebrew text, so the opinion of those who maintain its integrity, was in the last century completely refuted by the labours of Dr. Kennicott, who, from a collation of six hundred manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible, has demonstrated that there have been numberless small alterations, and some of considerable importance. We found formerly that the various readings of the Greek text of the New Testament arose from the ignorance or carelessness of transcribers, and that their being permitted could easily be reconciled with the wisdom of God, and the divine original of Christianity. We need not be surprised to find the same causes producing similar effects with regard to the Hebrew text. It has been said, that particular circumstances may naturally lead us to look for a greater number of such varieties in the Hebrew text than in the Greek ; and there is much reason to suspect that both the Hebrew text and the Septuagint translation were wilfully corrupted by the Jews after the days of our Saviour, in order to elude the argument which the Christians deduced from the clear application of Jewish prophecies to him. We know that, in the second century, another Greek translation of the Old Testament, by Aquila, more inaccurate, and designedly throwing a veil over many prophecies of the Messiah, was substituted by the Jews in place of the Septuagint. Taking then the learned men who have devoted themselves to this study as our guides, and resting in the conclusions which they have established by a laborious induction of particulars, we say, that the copies both of the Hebrew text and of the Septuagint, which were in use in the days of our Saviour, were more correct than those which we now have ; that by the help of many manuscripts, and of the Samaritan Pentateuch, which was much less corrupted than the books of Moses in Hebrew, the true reading of the Hebrew has been discovered in many places where it had been vitiated ; and that the honour of our Lord and his apostles has been fully vindicated ; for it appears that they quoted from the Septuagint when the sense of the author was there clearly expressed ; that, at other times, they translated the original for themselves, or used some translation more perfect than the Septuagint, and that there are many places in which their quotations, although different from the Hebrew that is now read, agree exactly with the Hebrew text, as by sound criticism it may be restored.

Such is the important service which sound criticism has rendered to religion. The unbeliever triumphed for a season in an objection

which was plausible, because the answer to it was misapprehended or unknown. But the progress of investigation has unfolded the truth, and has placed, in the most conspicuous light, the fidelity and accuracy of the quotations made by those who grounded Christianity upon Judaism.

SECTION V.

HAVING thus cleared the way, by settling every preliminary point, and removing the objections which appear to me the strongest, I come to state concisely the argument from prophecy, or the nature of that support which the truth of Christianity derives from the coincidence between the appearance of Jesus, and the predictions of the Old Testament.

In stating this argument, we allow that there are passages quoted by our Lord and his apostles from the Old Testament, in which there is merely an accommodation of words that had been spoken in one sense, to another sense, in which they are equally true. When it is said, in the second chapter of Matthew, "Joseph took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt, and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, out of Egypt have I called my Son," nothing more is meant by the expression, "that it might be fulfilled," and the idiom of ancient languages does not require any thing more to be understood, than that the words which in Hosea are applied to Israel, whom God calls his Son, received another meaning when he who is truly the Son of God, was brought out of the same place from which Israel came. We allow that it does not follow, from the possibility of this accommodation, that Hosea meant to foretell the future transference of his words, any more than that he who first enunciated a proverbial saying, foresaw all the particular occasions upon which it might be fitly applied. We admit, further, that the secondary sense of those prophecies in which we say the Messiah was included, and the typical nature of those ceremonies or actions which prefigured him, are not always obvious upon the consideration of particular prophecies or types. Nay, we admit that there is a degree of obscurity or doubt with regard to some of those prophecies in which the Messiah is directly foretold; and, therefore, the argument does not depend upon the clearness of any single prophecy, or upon the interpretation which may be given to this or that passage, but it arises from a connected view of the direct predictions, the secondary prophecies, and the types, as supporting and illustrating one another. Allow as much as any rational inquirer can allow to the shrewdness of conjecture, to accidental coincidence, and to human preparation, still the induction of particulars that cannot be accounted for by any of those means, is so complete and so striking, as to constitute a plain incontrovertible argument.

From the exact fulfilment of predictions extending through many centuries, uttered by different prophets, with different imagery, yet pointing to one train of events, and marking a variety of circumstances,

in their nature the most contingent; from the aptness of all the parts of the intermediate dispensation to shadow forth the blessings and the character of that ultimate dispensation which it announced, and from the sublime literal exposition which the events of the ultimate dispensation give to all those prophecies under the preparatory dispensation, which are expressed in language too exalted for the objects to which they were then applied;—from these things laid together, there arises, to any person who considers them with due care, the most satisfying conviction that the whole scheme of Christianity was foreseen and foretold under the Old Testament. If you admit this position, there are two consequences which you will admit as flowing from it. The first is, that the prophets under the Old Testament were divinely inspired. The very means, by which you attain a conviction that they prophesied of the gospel, render it manifest that the things foretold were beyond the reach of human sagacity; and there is thus presented to us, in the fulfilment of their predictions, an evidence of the truth of the Mosaic dispensation as clear as that arising from the miracles performed by Moses before the children of Israel. The second consequence, and that which we are more immediately concerned in drawing, is this, that the scheme in which the predictions of those prophets were fulfilled is a divine revelation. In order to perceive how this consequence flows from the position which we have been establishing, you will attend to the two uses of prophecy, its immediate use in the ages in which it was given, and that further use which extends to the latest ages of the world. It is certain that prophecy ministered to the comfort, the instruction, and the hope of those who lived in the days of the prophets; and we know, that the predictions respecting the Messiah were so far understood, as to excite in the whole nation of the Jews an expectation of the Messiah, and to cherish in just and devout men that state of mind, which is beautifully styled by Luke in the second chapter of his gospel, “waiting for the consolation of Israel,” and “looking for redemption in Jerusalem.” But that this was not the whole intention of the prophecies concerning the Messiah, appears indisputably from hence, that, according to the account which has been given of these prophecies, they contain a further provision than was necessary for that end. There were many parts of them which were not understood at that time, but were left to be unfolded to the age which was to behold their fulfilment. As such parts were useless to the age which received the prophecy, we must believe that, if they had any use, they were designed for that future age, and that the prophets, as the apostle Peter speaks, “ministered not unto themselves, but unto us, the things which are now reported by them that have preached the gospel.”*

Bishop Sherlock wrote his admirable discourses on the use and intent of prophecy in the several ages of the world, to show that prophecy was intended chiefly for the support of faith and religion in the old world, as faith and religion could not have existed in any age after the fall without this extraordinary support; and he has been led, by an attachment to his own system, to express himself in some places of his book to the disparagement of the further use of prophecy.

* 1 Peter i. 12.

Yet even Bishop Sherlock admits, that prophecy may be of great advantage to future ages, and says that it was not unworthy of the wisdom of God to enclose, from the days of old in the words of prophecy, a secret evidence which he intended the world should one day see. The Bishop has stated in these few words, with his wonted energy and facility of expression, that further use of prophecy of which I am speaking. It is merely a dispute about words, whether the laying up this secret evidence was the primary or the secondary intention of the Giver of prophecy. But it is plain, that when all the notices of the first coming of Christ, that were communicated to different nations, are brought together into our view, and explained by the event, they illustrate, in the most striking manner, both the truth and the importance of Christianity. The gospel appears to be not a solitary unrelated part of the divine economy, but the purpose which God purposed from the beginning; and Jesus comes according to the declared counsel of heaven to do the will of his Father. The miracles which he wrought derive a peculiar confirmation, from being the very works which ancient prophets had foretold as characteristical of the Messiah. Prophecy and miracle, in this way, lend their aid to one another, and give the most complete assurance which can be desired, that there is no deception: for as miracles could not have justified the claim of Jesus to the character of Messiah, unless ancient predictions had been fulfilled in him, so the miracles which he wrought were an essential part of that fulfilment; and hence arises the peculiar significancy and force of that answer which he made to the disciples of John, when they asked him, "Art thou he that should come?" "Go," said he, "and show John again those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." He refers to his miracles; but he mentions them in the very words of Isaiah, thus conjoining with that divine wisdom which shines in all his discourses, the two great arguments by which his disciples in all succeeding ages were to defend their faith. The internal evidence, too, arising from the nature of his undertaking, is very much heightened, when we see that that undertaking was the completion of the plan of Providence. We are often able to vindicate and explain the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, by referring to the manner in which they were sketched out by the preparatory dispensation; and the intimate connection of the two systems, which enables us to give a satisfactory account of the peculiarities of the law, reflects much dignity upon the gospel. While the kingdoms of this world are spoken of only in so far as the kingdom of the Messiah was to be affected by their fate, we see the servants of the Almighty preparing the way for the Prince of Peace; the continued effusion of the divine Spirit does honour to Jesus; the prophets arise in long succession to bear witness to him; and our respect for the sundry intimations of the will of heaven, is concentrated in reverence for that scheme towards which all of them tend. In the magnificence of that provision which ushered in the gospel, we recognise the majesty of God; in the continuity and nice adjustment of its parts, we trace his wisdom; and its increasing light

is analogous to that gradual preparation, by which all the works of God advance to maturity.

Such is the support which the truth of Christianity derives from the predictions of the Old Testament respecting the Messiah. The argument from prophecy, therefore, was not, as Mr. Gibbon sarcastically and incorrectly says, merely addressed to the Jews as an *argumentum ad hominum*. To those to whom the books of the Old Testament are known chiefly if not entirely by the references made to them in the gospel, it affords much confirmation to their faith, and much enlargement of their views with regard to Christianity.

Prideaux—Hartley—Gray—Prettyman's Institutes—Stillingfleet's Orig. Sacra—Chandler—Hurd—Warburton—Newton—Law—Syke—Kennicott—Randolph's Collation—Geddes's Prospectus—Lowth de Sacra Poesi—Horne's Preface to Commentary on the Psalms.

CHAPTER VII.

PREDICTIONS DELIVERED BY JESUS.

THE support of which we have hitherto spoken proceeds upon those prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah, which were fulfilled by his appearing in the flesh. But a due attention to the subject leads us much further, and we soon perceive that the birth of Christ, important and glorious as that event was, far from exhausting the significations given by the ancient prophets, only served to introduce other events most interesting to the human race, which were also foretold, which reach to the end of time, and which, as they arise in the order of Providence, are fitted to afford an increasing evidence of the truth of Christianity.

In entering upon this wide field of argument, which here opens to our view, I think it of importance to direct your attention to the admirable economy with which the prophecies of the Old Testament are disposed. They may be divided into two great classes, as they respect either the temporal condition of the Jews and their neighbours, or that future spiritual dispensation which was to arise in the latter days.

As the whole administration of the affairs of the Jews was for many ages conducted by prophecy, there are, in the Old Testament, numberless predictions concerning the temporal condition of themselves and their neighbours. Some of these predictions were to be fulfilled in a short time, so that the same persons who heard the prophecy saw the event. This near fulfilment of some predictions procured credit for others respecting more distant events. "Behold," said the Almighty to the nation of the Jews, "the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare. Before they spring up, I tell you of them."* There are prophecies of the temporal condition of nations, which are at this day fulfilling in the world. The present state of Babylon, of Tyre, of Egypt, of the descendants of Ishmael, and of the Jewish people themselves, have been shown by learned men, and particularly by Bishop Newton, to correspond exactly to the words of ancient prophets: and thus, as the experience of the Jewish nation taught them to expect every event which their prophets announced, so the visible continued accomplishment of what these prophets spoke two or three thousand years ago is to us a standing demonstration that they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

But this whole system of prophecy was merely a vehicle for pre-

* Isaiah xlii. 9.

serving and conveying to the world the hopes of a future spiritual dispensation. It embraced indeed the temporal affairs of the Jews, and of the nations with whom they were particularly connected, because an intermediate preparatory dispensation was established till the better hope should be brought in. But all the prophecies of temporal good and evil were subservient to the promise of the Messiah, and the fulfilment of those prophecies cherished among the nation of the Jews the expectation of that future covenant which was the end of the law. The birth of the Messiah justified this expectation. It did not indeed accomplish all the words of the prophets, but it brought assurance that there should be, in due time, a complete accomplishment. Several great events happened soon after the birth of the Messiah, according to the ancient Scriptures. Other instances of fulfilment are at this day seen in the religious state of the world, and there are parts of the prophecy yet to be fulfilled. We are thus placed in the middle of a great scheme, of which we have seen the beginning and the progress. The conclusion remains to be unfolded. But the correspondence to the words of the prophets, both in the events which are past, and in the present state of things, may establish our hope that the mystery of God will be finished; and the succession of events, as they open in the course of Providence upon the generations of men, gradually explain those parts of the prophecy which were not understood.

The prophecies of the temporal state of Babylon, Tyre, Egypt, and other nations which are now fulfilling in the world, are so clear, that any one versant in history may compare the event with the prediction—and I do not know a more pleasing, satisfactory book for this purpose than Newton on the Prophecies. But the prophecies of those events in the spiritual state of the world, which were to happen after the birth of the Messiah, are in general short and obscure; and although any person who is capable of considering the scheme of ancient prophecy, may be satisfied of its looking forward to the end of all things, yet without some assistance it would be impossible for him to form a distinct conception of what was to follow the birth of the Messiah, and difficult even to refer events as they arise, to their place in the prediction. This kind of obscurity was allowed by God to remain upon the ancient predictions respecting the future fortunes of the Messiah's kingdom, because a remedy was to arise in due time by the advent of that great Prophet who, having fulfilled in his appearance one part of those predictions, became the interpreter of that which remains. The miracles by which he showed that he was a messenger of heaven, and the exact coincidence between the history of his life, and the characters of the Jewish Messiah, were sufficient to procure credit for his interpretation. He was worthy to take the book which Daniel had said was sealed till the time of the end, to open the seals of it, and to explain to the nations of the earth the words which were shut up therein. Thus Jesus stands forth not only as the personage whom ancient prophets had foretold, but as himself a Prophet. The same spirit which had moved them, but whose significations of future events had ceased with Malachi, speaks by that messenger of the covenant whom Malachi had announced, and upon whom Isaiah had said the spirit of the Lord should rest: and there is

opened in the discourses of Jesus and the writings of his apostles, a series of predictions explicatory of the dark parts of ancient prophecy, and extending to the consummation of all things.

It is not possible to conceive a more perfect unity of design than that which we have now traced in the system of prophecy; and every human scheme fades and dwindles when compared with the magnificence and extent of this plan—Jesus Christ the corner-stone which connects the old and the new dispensation; in whom one part of the ancient predictions received its accomplishment, and from whom the other received its interpretation. The spirit of prophecy thus ministers in two distinct methods to the evidence of Christianity. It enclosed in the words and actions of the Old Testament a proof that Jesus was that person whom the Father had sanctified, and sent into the world; and it holds forth, in the words uttered by Jesus and his apostles, that mark of a divine mission, which all impostors have assumed, and which mankind have often ascribed to those who did not possess it, but which, where it really exists, may be easily distinguished from all false pretensions, and is one of the evidences which the Almighty hath taught us to look for in every messenger of his. He claims it as his prerogative to declare the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that shall be; he challenges the gods of the nations to give this proof of their divinity: “Produce your cause, saith the Lord: bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods.”* And he hath given this mark of his messengers: “When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him.”†

As Jesus assumed this universal character of a divine messenger, so he was distinguished from other prophets by the clearness, the extent, and the importance of his predictions. And he showed that the spirit was given to him without measure, by exercising the gift of prophecy upon subjects very different from one another, both in their nature, and in their times. He foretold events which seem to be regulated by the caprice of men, and those which depend purely upon the will of God. He foretold some events so near, that we find in Scripture both the prophecy and the fulfilment; others which took place a few years after the canon of Scripture was closed, with regard to which we learn the complete fulfilment of the prophecy from contemporary historians; others which are now carrying forward in the world, with regard to which the fulfilment of the prophecy is a matter of daily observation; and others which reach to distant periods, and to the consummation of all things, which are still the objects of a Christian’s hope, but with regard to which, hope rises in perfect assurance by the recollection of what is past.

This is a general view of the prophecies of Jesus and his apostles; and I recommend them to your particular attention and study, because, in my opinion, the evidence of Christianity derives two great advantages from the study of them. The *first* advantage arises from their appearing to be the explication and enlargement of

* Isaiah xli. 21, 23; xlvj. 9, 10.

† Jer. xxviii. 9.

the short obscure predictions contained in the Old Testament with regard to the same events ; such an explication as no other person was qualified to give, and therefore as clear a demonstration of the prophetic spirit of Jesus as if he uttered a series of predictions perfectly new, yet such an explication as illustrates the intimate connection of the two dispensations. The prophecies of Jesus and his apostles, while they introduce many particulars that are not found in the writings of the ancient prophets, are always consistent with the words spoken by them, referring to their images, and unfolding their dark sayings. The highest honour is, in this way, reflected upon the extent of the scheme of ancient prophecy ; and Jesus, by honouring this scheme, and carrying it forward, confirms his claim to the character of Jewish Messiah, because he speaks in a manner most becoming that great Prophet, who was to be raised up like unto Moses. The *second* advantage arising from a particular study of the predictions of Jesus, is this, that all the events, which constitute the history of his religion, thus appear to be the fulfilment of prophecy. Besides the support which every one of them in its place gives to the truth of Christianity, all together united as parts of a system, which had entered into the mind of the Author of our religion, and when they happen, they afford a demonstration that the God of knowledge had put words into his mouth.

To perceive distinctly the nature and the importance of this secondary advantage, the four Gospels should be read from beginning to end, with a special view to mark the prophecies of Jesus. In doing this, you will set down the many instances in which he discovers a knowledge of the human heart, of the intentions and thoughts of both his friends and his enemies, as of the same order with the gift of prophecy. You will find predictions of common occurrences, and near events, which must have made a deep impression upon those who lived with him ; and, scattered through all his discourses, you will meet with predictions of remote events, for which the fulfilment of the predictions of near events was fitted to procure credit. Out of the many particulars which, upon such a review, may engage your attention, I select the following important objects, as affording a specimen of the variety of our Saviour's prophecies, and of the manner in which those events which constitute the history of his religion, may be considered as the fulfilment of his predictions ; the prophecies of his death, of his resurrection, of the gift of the Holy Ghost, of the situation and behaviour of his disciples, of the destruction of Jerusalem, of the progress of his religion previous to that period, of the condition of the Jewish nation subsequent to it, and of the final discrimination of the righteous and the wicked.

1. The death of Jesus, that great event which, when considered in the Scripture view of it, is characteristical of the Gospel as the religion of sinners, is the subject of many of our Lord's prophecies. He marks, without hesitation, the time, the place, and the manner of it : the treachery of one disciple, the denial of another, the desertion of the rest, the sentence of condemnation which the supreme council of the Jewish nation, at a time when Jews were gathered from all corners of the land, was to pronounce in Jerusalem upon an innocent man, whom many of the people held to be a prophet, and the execu-

tion of that sentence by the Gentiles, to whom the rulers of the Jews, jealous as they were of their own authority, and indignant under the Roman yoke, were to deliver the pannel. But of all kinds of death which might have been inflicted, the prophecy of Jesus selects one unknown in the land of Judea, and reserved by the Romans for slaves, who, having been distinguished from freemen in their life, were distinguished also in the manner of their death. It is not possible to conceive any events more contingent than those which this prophecy embraces. Yet it was literally fulfilled. When you examine it attentively, there are several particulars which you will be delighted with marking, because they constitute an indirect support to the truth of Christianity, arising out of the contexture of the prophecy. Thus, you will find that the prophecy applies to Jesus many minute circumstances in the Jewish types of the Messiah, and in this way shows us that as the death of the Messiah had been shadowed forth by the sacrifices of the law, and foretold by Isaiah and Daniel, so the manner of it had, from the beginning, been in the view of the spirit of prophecy, and was signified beforehand in various ways. You will admire the magnanimity of that man who came into the world that he might lay down his life, and who never courted the favour of the people, or shrunk from the discharge of any duty, although all the circumstances of barbarity that marked his death were fully before his eyes. You will admire the dignity, and the regard to the peace of his country, which restrained Jesus from raising the pity and the indignation of the multitude by publishing his future sufferings to them, and which led him to address all the clear minute predictions of his death to his disciples in private. You will admire the tenderness and wisdom with which he delayed any such communication even to them, till they had declared a conviction of his being the Messiah, and then gradually unfolded the dismal subject as they were able to bear it; and you will perceive the gracious purpose which was promoted by the growing particularity of his prophecy, as the event drew near. "Now," says he, "I tell you before it come, that when it come to pass, ye may believe, that I am he."*

2. The circumstances of his death, every one of which had been foretold by himself, thus served to procure credit for that prophecy of his resurrection, which was always conjoined with them. The ancient prophets had declared that the Messiah was to live for ever; and as both Isaiah and Daniel, who spoke of his everlasting kingdom, had spoken also of his being cut off out of the land of the living, their words implied that he was to rise from the dead. This implication of a resurrection was brought out by our Lord. Conscious of the divine power which dwelt in him, he said that on the third day he should rise again; and in the hearing of all the people, he held forth Jonas as a type of himself. The people recalled his words as soon as he was put to death, for "the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, after three days I will rise again:"† and they vainly employed precautions to prevent the fulfilment of his prophecy. The apostles have left a most natural picture of their own weakness and

* John xiii. 19.

† Matt. xxvii. 62, 63.

disappointment, by transmitting it upon record to posterity, that the death of Jesus effaced from their minds his promise of rising again, or at least destroyed in the interval their faith of its being fulfilled. But you will find that both the angels who appeared to the women, and our Lord in his discourses with the disciples, recalled the prophecy to their minds; and, by one expression of John, you may judge of the confirmation which their faith was to receive from the recollection of predictions which had been addressed to themselves, and the fulfilment of which they had seen. When the Jews asked a sign of him, he said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews understood him to mean the temple in which they were standing. "But he spake," says John, "of the temple of his body. When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."* There is no fact in the history of the Christian religion more important than the resurrection of Jesus. It is that seal of his commission, without which all the others are of none avail; the assurance to us that the purpose of his death is accomplished, and the pledge of our resurrection. "If Christ be not risen, our faith is vain." As the evidence of the fact therefore will appear to us, when we proceed to examine it, to be most particular and satisfying, so it was most natural that this very important fact should be the subject of prophecy.

3. Our Lord foretold also that he was to ascend into heaven; and the fulfilment of this prophecy was made an object of sense to the apostles as far as their eyes could reach. But that they might be satisfied there was no illusion, and that the rest of the world might know assuredly that he was gone to the Father, the prophecy of this ascension was connected with the promise of the Holy Ghost, which he said he would send from his Father to comfort the disciples after his departure, to qualify them for preaching his religion, and to ensure the success of their labours. You learn from the book of Acts the fulfilment of this promise; and when you examine the subject the following circumstances will deserve your attention. The miraculous gifts poured forth on the day of Pentecost are stated by the apostle Peter as "that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh."† The last days is a prophetic expression for the age of the Messiah, which was to succeed the age of the law. It is plain that the prophecy of Joel had not been fulfilled before the day of Pentecost; for during the greater part of the time that had elapsed between the word of Joel and that day, the prophetic spirit had ceased entirely. His word did receive a visible fulfilment upon that day; and this fulfilment being an event which our Lord had taught his apostles to look for, Peter was entitled to apply the word of Joel to the event which then took place; and our Lord appears in his promise of the Holy Ghost, as in his other prophecies, to be the true interpreter of ancient predictions. Further, the promise of Jesus does not respect merely the inward influences of the Spirit. These, however essential to the comfort and improvement of man, do not

* John ii. 18—22.

† Acts ii. 16, 17.

admit of being clearly proved to others, either by the testimony of sense, or by the deductions of reason, and cannot always be distinguished by certain marks from the visions of fanatical men. But the promise of Jesus expresses precisely external visible works, to which the power of imagination does not reach, and with regard to which every spectator may attain the same assurance as with regard to any other object of sense. "These signs," said Jesus before his ascension, "shall follow them that believe. In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and, if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them: they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."* It limits a time, within which the faculty of performing such works was to be conferred; and it chooses the most public place as the scene of their being exhibited. For Jesus, just before he was taken up into heaven, "commanded his apostles that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which," saith he, "ye have heard of me; ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."† Lastly, You will be led by the examination of this subject to observe, that when the works performed, in consequence of the gifts conferred upon the day of Pentecost, became palpable to the senses of men, they were, like the miracles of Jesus, the vouchers of a divine commission. Being performed in his name, and in fulfilment of his promise, they were fitted to convince the world that he had received power from the Father after his ascension, and that he had given this power to his apostles. These men were, in this way, recommended to the world as sent by Jesus to carry forward the great scheme which he had opened. Full credit was procured for all that they taught, because their works were the signs of those internal operations by which they were inspired with the knowledge, wisdom, and fortitude necessary for their undertaking; and their works were also the pledges of the fulfilment of that promise which extends to true Christians in all ages, that the Holy Spirit shall be given to those who ask it, according to the measure of their necessities.

4. The fourth subject of our Lord's prophecies which I mentioned, was the situation and the behaviour of his apostles after he should leave them. He never amused them with false hopes; he forewarned them of all the scorn, and hatred, and persecution which they were to expect in preaching his religion: and yet, although he had daily experience of their timidity, and slowness of apprehension, although he foretold that at his death they would forsake him, yet he foretold with equal assurance, that after his ascension they should be his witnesses to the ends of the earth; and he left in the hands of these feeble men, who were to be involved in calamities upon his account, that cause for which he had lived and died, without expressing any apprehension that it would suffer by their weakness. "If ye were of the world," he says in his last discourse to them before his death, "the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth God service.

* Mark xvi. 17, 18.

† Acts i. 4, 5.

And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.”* There is in all this a dignity of manner, and a consciousness of divine resources, which exalts Jesus above every other person that appears in history. When we see in the propagation of his religion, the fortitude, the wisdom, and the eloquence of his servants, their steadfastness amidst trials sufficient to shake the firmest minds, and the joy which they felt in being counted worthy to suffer for his name, we remember his words, and we discern the fruits of that baptism, where-with they were baptized on the day of Pentecost. In a heroism, so different from the former conduct of these men, and so manifestly the gift of God, we recognise the spirit which both dictated the prophecy, and brought about the event; and our Lord’s prediction of the situation and behaviour of his apostles, when thus compared with the event, furnishes the most striking illustration of his truth, his candour, his knowledge, and his power.

5. We come now to the longest and most circumstantial of our Lord’s prophecies. It respects immediately the destruction of Jerusalem; but we shall find that it embraces also the remaining subjects of prophecy which I mentioned, and, in speaking of them, I mean to follow it as my guide.

The prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem was uttered at a time when Judea was in complete subjection to the Romans. A Roman governor resided in Jerusalem with an armed force; and this state, no longer at enmity with the masters of the world, was regarded as a part of the Roman empire. There was it is true, a general indignation at the Roman yoke, a tendency in the minds of the people to sedition and tumult, and a fear in the council lest these sentiments should at some time be expressed with such violence, as to provoke the Romans to take away their place and their nation. It was, in fact, the turbulent spirit, and the repeated insurrections of the Jewish people, which did incense the Romans; and a person well acquainted with the disaffection which generally prevailed, and the character of those who felt it, might foresee that the public tranquillity would not continue long, and that this sullen stiff-necked people were preparing for themselves, by their murmurings and violence, more severe chastisements than they had endured, when they were reduced into the form of a Roman province. But although a sagacious enlightened mind, which rose above vulgar prejudices, and looked forward to remote consequences, might foresee such an event, yet the manner of the chastisement, the signs which were to announce its approach, the measure in which it was to be administered, and the length of time during which it was to continue,—all these were out of the reach of human foresight. There is a particularity in this prophecy, by which it is clearly distinguished from the conjectures of wise men. It embraces a multitude of contingencies depending upon the caprice of the people, upon the wisdom of military commanders, upon the fury of soldiers. It describes one certain method of doing that which might have been done in many other ways, a method of subduing a rebel

* John. xv. 19; xvi. 2, 3, 4.

lions city very different from the general conduct of the Romans, who were too wise to destroy the provinces which they conquered, and very opposite to the character of Titus the emperor, under whose command Jerusalem was besieged, one of the mildest and gentlest men that ever lived, who placed at the head of the empire of the world, is called by historians, the love and delight of mankind. The author of a new religion must have been careless of his reputation, and of the success of his scheme, who ventured to foretell such a number of improbable events without knowing certainly that they were to come to pass; and it required not the wisdom of a man, but the Spirit of the God of knowledge, to foresee that all of them would concur, before the generation that was then alive upon the earth passed away. Yet this prophecy Jesus uttered about forty years before the event. The prophecy was not laid up after it was uttered, like the pretended oracles of the heathen nations, in some repository, where it might be corrected by the event. But, having been brought to the remembrance of those who heard it spoken, by the spirit which Jesus sent into the hearts of his apostles after his ascension, it was inserted in books which were published before the time of the fulfilment. We know that John lived to see the destruction of Jerusalem, and it is not certain whether he wrote his Gospel before or after that event. But John has omitted this prophecy altogether. Our knowledge of it is derived from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which were carried by the Christian converts into all parts of the world while Jerusalem stood, which were early translated into different languages, which are quoted by writers in the succeeding age, and were universally held by the first Christians as books of authority, as the standards of faith. In these books thus authenticated to us, we find various intimations of the destruction of Jerusalem, by parables and short hints interwoven in the thread of the history; and all the three contain the same long particular prophecy, with a small variety of expression, but without the least discordance, or even alteration of the sense. The greatest part of this long prophecy has been most strikingly fulfilled, and there are parts, the fulfilment of which is now going on in the world.

We learn the fulfilment of the greater part of this prophecy, not from Christian writers only, but from one author, whose witness is unexceptionable, because it is not the witness of a friend; and who seems to have been preserved by Providence, in order to transmit to posterity a circumstantial account of the siege. Josephus, a Jew, who wrote a history of his country, has left also a relation of that war in which Jerusalem was destroyed. In the beginning of the war, he was a commander in Galilee. But being besieged by Vespasian, he fled with forty more, after a gallant resistance, and hid himself in a cave. Vespasian having discovered their lurking place, offered them their life. Josephus was willing to accept it. But his companions refused to surrender. With a view to prolong the time, and in hopes of overcoming their obstinacy, he prevailed upon them to cast lots who should die first. The lots were cast two by two: and that God, who disposeth of the lot, so ordered it, that of the forty, thirty-nine were killed by the hands of one another, and one only was left with Josephus. This man yielded to his entreaties; and these two, instead

of drawing lots who should kill the other, went together, and offered themselves to Vespasian. The miserable fate of their companions procured them a kind reception; and from that time Josephus remained in the Roman camp, an eye witness of every thing that happened during the siege. He has the reputation of a diligent faithful historian in his other work. And his very particular account of the siege was revised by Vespasian and Titus, and published by their order. The only impeachment that has ever been brought against the veracity of Josephus is, that although his history of the Jews comprehends the period in which our Lord lived, he hardly makes mention of his name; and, although exact and minute in every thing else, enters into no detail of the memorable circumstances that attended his appearance, or the influence which it had upon the minds of the people. He takes no notice of this prophecy. A Jewish priest, whose silence betrays his enmity to Jesus, certainly did not wish that it should be fulfilled: and yet his history of the siege is a comment upon the prophecy; every word which our Lord utters receiving the clearest explication, and most plainly meeting its event in the narration of this prejudiced Jewish historian.

Archbishop Tillotson, Newton on the prophecies, Lardner, Jortin, Newcome, and many other writers, have made very full extracts from Josephus, and, by setting the narration of the historian over against the prediction of our Lord, have shown the exact accomplishment of the words of the great Prophet, from the record of a man who did not acknowledge his divine mission. These extracts well deserve your study. But it is not necessary, after the labour which so many learned men have bestowed upon this subject, that I should lead you minutely through the parts of the prophecy. There are, however, some circumstances upon which I think it of importance to fix your attention. I mean, therefore, to give a distinct account of the occasion which led our Lord to utter this prophecy; and, after collecting briefly the chief points respecting the siege, I shall dwell upon the striking prophecy of the progress of Christianity before that period, which Matthew has preserved in his twenty-fourth chapter.

Our Lord had uttered in the temple, in the hearing of a mixed multitude, a pathetic lamentation over the distress that awaited the Jewish nation. As he goes out of the temple towards the mount of Olives, the usual place of his retirement, the disciples, struck with the expression he had used, "Behold your house is left unto you desolate," as if to move his compassion and mitigate the sentence, point out to him, while he passed along, the buildings of the temple, and the goodly stones and gifts with which it was adorned. The great temple which Solomon had built, was destroyed at the time of the Babylonish captivity. Cyrus permitted the two tribes, who returned to Judea, to rebuild the house of their God. And this second temple was repaired and adorned by Herod the Great, who, having received the crown of Judea from the Romans, thought that the most effectual way of overcoming the prejudices, and obtaining the favour of the Jewish people, was by beautifying and enlarging, after the plan of Solomon's temple, the building which had been hastily erected in the reigns of Cyrus and Darius. It was still accounted the second temple, but was so much improved by the preparation which Herod made,

that both Josephus and the Roman historians celebrate the extent, the beauty, and the splendour, of the building. And Josephus mentions, in particular, marble stones of a stupendous size in the foundation, and in different parts of the building. The disciples, we may suppose, point out these stones, lamenting the destruction of such a fabric; or perhaps meaning to insinuate, that it would not be easy for the hand of man to destroy it. But Jesus answered, "Verily, I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." It is a proverbial saying, marking the complete destruction of the temple; and there would not, according to the general analogy of language, have been any impropriety in the use of it, if the temple had been rendered unfit for being a place of worship, although piles of stones had been left standing in the court. But, by the providence of God, even this proverbial expression was fulfilled, according to the literal acceptation of the words. Titus was most solicitous to preserve so splendid a monument of the victories of Rome; and he sent a message to the Jews who had enclosed themselves in the temple, that he was determined to save it from ruin.— But they could not bear that the house of their God, the pride and glory of their nation, should fall into the hands of the heathen, and they set fire to the porticoes. A soldier, observing the flames, threw a burning brand in at the window; and others, incensed at the obstinate resistance of the Jews, without regard to the commands or threatenings of their General, who ran to extinguish the flames, continued to set fire to different parts of it, and at length even to the doors of the holy place. "And thus," says Josephus, "the temple was burnt to the ground, against the will of Titus." After it was in this way rendered useless, he ordered the foundations, probably on account of the unusual size of the stones, to be dug up. And Rufus, who commanded the army after his departure, executed this order, by tearing them up with a plough-share; so truly did Micah say of old, "Zion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest."*

The multitude probably pressing around our Lord as he went out of the temple, the disciples forbear to ask any particular explication of his words, till they come to the Mount of Olives. That mount was at no great distance from Jerusalem, and over against the temple, so that any person sitting upon it, had an excellent view of the whole fabric. The disciples, deeply impressed with what they had heard, and anxious to receive the fullest information concerning the fate of the city of their solemnities, now that they are retired from the multitude, come around Jesus upon the mount, and looking down to the temple, say, "Tell us, when shall these things be; and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"† It is of consequence that you form a clear apprehension of the import of this question. The end of the world, according to the use of that phrase to which our ears are accustomed, means the consummation of all things. And this circumstance, joined with some expressions in the prophecy, has led several interpreters to suppose that the apostles were asking the time of the judgment. But to a Jew, ἡ συντέλεια του αἰωνος, often con-

* Micah iii. 12.

† Matt. xxiv. 3.

veyed nothing more than the end of the age. Time was divided by the Jews into two great periods, the age of the law and the age of the Messiah. The conclusion of the one was the beginning of the other, the opening of that kingdom which the Jews believed the Messiah was to establish, which was to put an end to their sufferings, and to render them the greatest people upon the earth. The apostles, full of this hope, said to our Lord, immediately before his ascension, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Our Lord used the phrase of his coming, to denote his taking vengeance upon the Jews by destroying their city and temple. "There shall be some standing here," he said, "that shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."* All that heard him are long since gathered to their fathers, and Jesus has not yet come to judge the world. But John we know, survived the destruction of Jerusalem. There are two other places in the New Testament where a phrase almost the same with ἡ συντελεία του αἰῶνος occurs. And in neither does it signify what we call the end of the world. The apostle to the Hebrews, ix. 26, says, "But now once, ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων, hath Christ appeared." At the conclusion of that dispensation under which the blood of bulls and goats was offered upon the altar of God, "Christ appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." The apostle to the Corinthians says, "These things are written for our admonition, upon whom are come τὰ τελεῖ τῶν αἰώνων,"† our translation renders it, "the ends of the world." Yet the world has lasted about 1800 years since the apostolic days; the meaning is, the ends of the ages, the conclusion of the one age, and the beginning of the other, are come upon us; for we have seen both.

It is agreeable, then, to the phrasology of Scripture, and to the expectations of the apostles, to interpret their question here, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" as meaning nothing more than the corresponding question, to which an answer, in substance the same, is given in the 13th chapter of Mark, and the 21st of Luke. What shall be the sign when these things, this prophecy of the destruction of the temple, shall be fulfilled, or come to pass? But the language in which the question is proposed in Matthew, suggests to us the sentiment which had probably arisen in the minds of the apostles, after hearing the declaration of our Lord, as they walked from the temple to the Mount of Olives. They conceived that the whole frame of the Jewish polity was to be dissolved, that the glorious kingdom of the Messiah was to commence, and that, as all the nations of the earth were to be gathered to this kingdom, and Jerusalem was to be the capital of the world, the temple which now stood, extensive and magnificent as it was, would be too small for the reception of the worshippers, that on this account it was to be laid in ruins, and one much more splendid, more suitable to the dignity of the Messiah, and far surpassing every human work, was to be erected in its stead. Possessed with these exalted imaginations, and anticipating their own dignity in being the ministers of this temple, they come to Jesus and say, "Tell us when these things shall be, and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the age?" The

* Matt. xvi. 28.

† 1 Cor. x. 11.

question consists of two parts. They ask the time, and they ask the signs. Our Lord begins with giving a particular answer to the second question. He afterwards limits the time to the existence of the generation then alive upon the earth. But he represses their curiosity as to the day or the hour.

Of the signs mentioned by our Lord, I shall give a short general view, deriving the account of the fulfilment of his words from the history of the events left us by Josephus, and shall then fix your attention upon that prophecy of the general progress of Christianity before the destruction of Jerusalem, which you will find in the 24th chapter of Matthew.

The first sign is the number of false Christs who were to arise in the interval between the prophecy and the event; impostors who, finding a general expectation of the Messiah, as the seventy weeks of Daniel were conceived to be accomplished, and a disposition to revolt from the Romans, assumed a character corresponding to the wishes of the people. There is frequent reference to these impostors in the book of Acts; and Josephus says, that numbers of them were taken under the government of Felix. They led out the deluded people in crowds, promising to show them great signs, and to deliver them from all their calamities, and thus exposed them to be cut to pieces by the Roman soldiers, as disturbers of the peace. Our Lord graciously warns the apostles not to go after these men; to put no faith in any message which they pretended to bring from him, but to rest satisfied with the directions contained in this prophecy, or hereafter communicated to themselves by his Spirit. While he thus preserves his followers from the destruction which came upon many of the Jews, he enables them, by reading in that destruction the fulfilment of his words, and a proof of his divine character, to derive from the fate of their unwise countrymen an early confirmation of their own faith.

The second sign consists of great calamities which were to happen during the interval. The madness of Caligula, who succeeded Tiberius, butchered many of the Jews; and there was in his reign the rumour of a war, which was likely to be the destruction of the nation. He ordered his statue to be erected in the temple of Jerusalem. Not conceiving why an honour, which was granted to him by the other provinces of the empire, should be refused by Judea; and not being wise enough to respect the religious prejudices of those who were subject to him, he rejected their remonstrances, and persisted in his demand. The Jews had too high a veneration for the house of the true God, to admit of any thing like divine honours being there paid to a mortal, and they resolved to suffer every distress, rather than to give their countenance to the sacrilege of the emperor. Such was the consternation which the rumour of this war spread through Judea, that the people neglected to till their lands, and in despair waited the approach of the enemy. But the death of Caligula removed their fears, and delayed for some time that destruction which he meditated. Although, therefore, says Jesus, you will find the Jews troubled when these wars arise, as if the end of their state was at hand, be not ye afraid, but know that many things must first be accomplished. What strength was the faith of the apostles to derive from this prophecy, but a few years after our Lord's death, when they heard of rumours

of wars, when they beheld the despair of their countrymen, and yet saw the cloud dispelled, and the peace of their country restored! The peace, indeed, was soon interrupted by frequent engagements between the Jewish and heathen inhabitants of many cities in the province of Syria; by disputes about the bounds of their jurisdiction, amongst the governors of the different tetrarchies or kingdoms into which the land of Palestine was divided; and by the wars arising from the quick succession of emperors, and the violent competitions for the imperial diadem. It was not the sword only that filled with calamity this disastrous interval. The human race, according to the words of this prophecy, suffered under those judgments which proceed immediately from heaven. Josephus has mentioned famine and pestilence, earthquakes in all places of the world where Jews resided, and one in Judea attended with circumstances so dreadful and so unusual, that it was manifest, he says, the whole power of nature was disturbed for the destruction of men.

The third sign is the persecution of the Christians. The sufferings of which we read in the Epistles and the Acts were early aggravated by the famines, and pestilence, and earthquakes with which God at this time afflicted the earth. The Christians were regarded as the causes of these calamities; and the heathen, without inquiring into the nature of their religion, but viewing it as a new pestilential superstition, most offensive to the gods, tried to appease the divine anger which manifested itself in various judgments, by bringing every indignity and barbarity upon the Christians. The example was set by Nero, who, having in the madness of his wickedness set fire to Rome that he might enjoy the sight of a great city in flames, turned the tide of that indignation, which the report excited, from himself against the Christians, by accusing them of this atrocious crime. He found the people not unwilling to believe any thing of a sect whom they held in abhorrence: and both in this, and in many other instances, the Christians suffered the most exquisite torments for crimes not their own, and as the authors of calamities which they did not occasion. The persecution which they endured has been well called by one of the oldest apologists for Christianity,* a war against the name, proceeding not from hatred to them as individuals, but from enmity to the name which they bore. "Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake."

The fourth sign is the apostacy and treachery of many who had borne this name. Although persecution naturally tends to unite those who are persecuted, and although the religion of Jesus can boast of an innumerable company of martyrs, who in the flames witnessed a good confession, yet there were some in the earliest ages who made shipwreck of faith, and endeavoured to gain the favour of the heathen magistrates by informing against their brethren. This apostacy is often severely reprehended in the epistles of Paul; and the Roman historian speaks of a multitude of Christians who were convicted of bearing the name, upon the evidence of those who confessed first.† It cannot surprise any one who considers the weakness of human nature, that such examples did occur. But it must appear very much

* Justin Martyr.

† Tac. Ann. xv. 44.

to the honour of Jesus, that he adventures to utter such a prophecy. He is not afraid of sowing jealousy and distrust amongst his followers. He knew that many were able to endure the trial of affliction, and he leaves the chaff to be separated from the wheat.

The fifth sign is the multitude of false teachers, men who, either from an attachment to the law of Moses, or from the pride of false philosophy, corrupted the simplicity of the Gospel. This perversion appeared in the days of the apostles. Complaints of it, and warnings against it, are scattered through all their epistles. Neither the sword of the persecutor, nor the wit of the scorner has done so much injury to the cause of Christianity, as the strifes and idle disputes of those who bear his name. Many in early times, were shaken by the errors of false prophets. Improper sentiments and passions were cherished; the union of Christians was broken, and the religion of love and peace became an occasion of discord. But these corruptions, however disgraceful to Christians, are a testimony both of the candour and the divine knowledge of the author of the Gospel; and even those who perverted his religion fulfilled his words.

We have now gone through those signs which announced the destruction of Jerusalem, and we are come to the circumstances, marked in the prophecy, which happened during the siege.

The first is, Jerusalem being compassed with armies, or, as Matthew expressed it, the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place. There were commonly engraved upon the Roman standards, after the times of the republic, the images of those emperors whom admiration or flattery had translated into the number of Gods. The soldiers were accustomed to swear by these images, to worship them, and to account them the gods of battle. The Jews, educated in an abhorrence of idolatry, could not bear that images, before which men thus bowed, should be brought within the precincts of their city; and soon after the death of our Lord, they requested a Roman general, Vitellius, who was leading troops through Judea against an enemy of the emperor, to take another road, because, said they, it is not *κατὰ τὸν ἥμιν* to behold from our city any images. With strict propriety, then, the dark expression of Daniel, which had not till that time been understood, is interpreted by our Lord as meaning the offensive images of a great multitude of standards brought within that space, a circumference of two miles round the city which was accounted holy, in order to render the city desolate; and he mentions this as the signal to his followers to fly from the low parts of Judea to the mountains. It may appear to you too late to think of flying, after the Roman armies were seen from Jerusalem. But the manner in which the siege was conducted justified the wisdom of this advice. A few years before Titus destroyed Jerusalem, Cestius Gallus laid siege to it; he might have taken the city if he had persevered; but without any reason that was known, says Josephus, he suddenly led away his forces. And after his departure many fled from the city as from a sinking ship. Vespasian, too, was slow in his approaches to the city; and by the distractions which at that time took place in the government of Rome, was frequently diverted from executing his purpose; so that the Christians, to whom the first appearance of Cestius's army brought

an explanation of the words of Jesus, by following his directions, escaped entirely from the carnage of the Jews. Our Lord warns his disciples of the imminency of the danger, and urges them, by various expressions, to the greatest speed in their flight. The reason of this urgency is explained by Josephus. After Titus sat down before Jerusalem, he surrounded the city with a wall, which was finished in three days, so that none could escape; and factions were by that time become so violent, that none were allowed to surrender. The party called zealots, who in their zeal for the law of Moses, and in the hope of receiving deliverance from heaven, thought it their duty to resist the Romans to the last extremity, put to death all who attempted to desert, and thus assisted the enemy in enclosing an immense multitude within this devoted city. With what gracious foresight does the divine prophet guard his followers against this complication of evils, and repeat his warning in the most striking words, in order to convince all who paid regard to what he said, that their only safety lay in flight!

A second circumstance by which our Lord marks this siege, is the unparalleled distress that was then to be endured. "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of this world to this time; no, nor ever shall be." It is a very strong expression, of itself sufficient to distinguish this prophecy from conjecture. And the expression, strong as it appears, is so strictly applicable to the subject, that we find almost the same words in Josephus, who certainly did not copy them from Jesus. "In my opinion," he says, "all the calamities which ever were endured since the beginning of the world were inferior to those which the Jews now suffered. Never was any city more wicked, and never did any city receive such punishment. Without was the Roman army, surrounding their walls, crucifying thousands before their eyes, and laying waste their country: within were the most violent contentions among the besieged, frequent bloody battles between different parties, rapine, fire, and the extremity of famine. Many of the Jews prayed for the success of the Romans, as the only method to deliver them from a more dreadful calamity, the atrocious violence of their civil dissensions."

A third circumstance mentioned by our Lord, is the shortening of the siege. Josephus computes that there fell, during the siege, by the hands of the Romans, and by their own faction, 1,100,000 Jews. Had the siege continued long, the whole nation would have perished. But the Lord shortened the days for the elect's sake: the elect, that is, in scripture language, the Christians, both those Jews within the city, whom this fulfilment of the words of Jesus was to convert to Christianity, and those Christians who, according to the directions of their Master, had fled out of the city at the approach of the Roman army, and were then living in the mountains. The manner in which the days were shortened is most striking. Vespasian committed the conduct of the siege to Titus, then a young man, impatient of resistance, jealous of the honour of the Roman army, and in haste to return from the conquest of an obscure province to the capital of the empire. He prosecuted the siege with vigour; he invited the besieged to yield, by offering them peace; and he tried to intimidate them, by using, contrary to his nature, every species of cruelty against those who fell

into his hands. But all his vigour, and all his arts, would have been in vain, had it not been for the madness of those within. They fought with one another; they burned, in their fury, magazines of provisions sufficient to last them for years; and they deserted with a foolish confidence strong holds, out of which no enemy could have dragged them. After they had thus delivered their city into his hands, Titus, when he was viewing it, said, "God has been upon our side. Neither the hands nor the machines of men could have been of any avail against those towers. But God has pulled the Jews out of them, that he might give them to us." It was impossible for Titus to restrain the soldiers, irritated by an obstinate resistance, from executing their fury against the besieged. But his native clemency spared the Jews in other places. He would not allow the senate of Antioch, that city in which the disciples were first called Christians, to expel the Jews; for where, said he, shall these people go, now that we have destroyed their city? Titus was the servant of God to execute his vengeance on Jerusalem. But when the measure of that vengeance was fulfilled, the compassion of this amiable prince was employed to restrain the wrath of man. "The Lord shortened the days."

A fourth circumstance is, the number of false Christs, men, of whom we read in Josephus, who, both during the siege and after it, kept up the spirits of the people, and rendered them obstinate in their resistance, by giving them hopes that the Messiah was at hand to deliver them out of all their calamities. The greater the distress was, the people were the more disposed to catch at this hope; and, therefore, it was necessary for our Lord to warn his disciples against being deluded by it.

The last circumstance is, the extent of this distress. Our Lord has employed a bold figure. But the boldest of his figures are always literally true: "As the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be: For wheresoever the carcase is, there shall the eagles be gathered together." The Roman army, who were at this time the servants of the Son of man, entered on the east side of Judea, and carried their devastation westward; so that, in this grand image, the very direction of the ruin, as well as the suddenness of it, is painted: and it extended to every place where Jews were to be found. A gold or silver eagle, borne on the top of a spear, belonged to every legion, and was always carried along with it. Wheresoever the carcase—the Jewish people who were judicially condemned by God—was, there were also those eagles. There was no part of Judea, says Josephus, which did not partake of the miseries of the capital; and his history of the Jewish war ends with numbering the thousands who fell in other places of the world also by the Roman sword.

I have thus led you, as particularly as appears to me to be necessary, through the prophecy of our Lord respecting the signs, which announced the destruction of Jerusalem, and the circumstances which attended the siege; and I wish now to fix your attention upon a particular prediction interwoven in this prophecy, concerning the progress of Christianity previous to that period, both because the subject renders it interesting, and because the place which our Lord has

given it in this prophecy, opens a most instructive and enlarged view of the economy of the divine dispensations.

6. The prediction is—"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness to all nations, and then shall the end" of the Jewish state "come."

We find our Lord always speaking with confidence of the establishment of his religion in the world. It is a confidence which could not reasonably be inspired by any thing he beheld : multitudes following him out of curiosity, but easily offended, and at length demanding his crucifixion—a few unlearned, feeble men, affectionately attached indeed to his person, but with very imperfect apprehensions of his religion, and devoid of the most likely instruments of spreading even their own apprehensions through the world—a world which hated him while he lived, and which he knew was to hate his disciples after his death—a world, consisting of Jews, wedded to their own religion, and abhorring his doctrine as an impious attempt to supersede the law of Moses ; and of heathens, amongst whom the philosophers, full of their own wisdom, despised the simplicity of the gospel, and the vulgar, devoted to childish abominable superstitions, and averse from the spiritual worship of the gospel, were disposed to execute the vengeance of jealous malignant deities upon a body of men who refused to offer incense at their altars—a world, too, in which every kind of vice abounded—in which the passions of men demanded indulgence, and spurned at the restraint of the holy commandment of Jesus. Yet in these circumstances, with such obstacles, our Lord, conscious of his divine character, and knowing that the Spirit was given to him without measure, foretells, with perfect assurance, that his gospel shall be preached in all the world. Had he fixed no time, this prophecy, bold as it is, might have been regarded as one of the acts by which an impostor tries to raise the spirits of his followers ; and we should have heard it said, that, instead of a mark of the spirit of prophecy, there was here only the sagacity of a man, who, aware of the wonderful revolutions in the opinions and manners of men, trusting that, in some succeeding age, after other systems had in their turn been exploded, his system might become fashionable, had ventured to say, that it should be preached in all the world, and left the age which should see this publication to convert an indefinite expression into an accomplished prophecy. But here is nothing indefinite—a pointed, precise declaration, which no impostor, who was anxious about the success of his system, would have hazarded, and concerning the truth of which, many of that generation amongst whom he lived remained long enough upon earth to be able to judge. The end, by the connection of the words with the context, means the conclusion of the age of the law ; and it is still more clearly said, in the 13th chapter of Mark, in the middle of the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, "But the Gospel must first be published to all nations." Now, the destruction of Jerusalem happened within forty years after the death of our Saviour, so that we are restricted to this space of time in speaking of the fulfilment of the prophecy. We learn from the book of Acts, that many thousands were converted soon after the day of Pentecost, and that devout Jews out of every nation under heaven.

were witnesses of the miraculous effusion of the Holy Ghost. These men, all of whom were amazed, and some of whom were converted, by what they saw, could not fail to carry the report home, and thus prepared distant nations for receiving those who were better qualified, and more expressly commissioned, to preach the gospel. After the death of Stephen, there arose a great persecution against the church of Jerusalem, which by this time had multiplied exceedingly; and they “were scattered abroad through the regions of Judea and Samaria; and they travelled as far as Phœnice, and Cyprus, and Antioch; and the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed.” The book of Acts is chiefly an account of the labours of the Apostle Paul; and we see this one apostle, to adopt the words of a fellow-labourer of his, a preacher both in the East, and to the utmost boundaries of the West, planting churches in Asia and Greece, and travelling from Jerusalem to Illyricum, a tract which has been computed to be not less than 2000 miles. If such were the labours of one, what must have been accomplished by the journeyings of all the twelve, who, taking different districts, went forth to fulfil the last command of their master, by being his witnesses to the uttermost ends of the earth. The Apostle Paul says, in his epistle to the Romans, “that their faith was spoken of throughout all the world;” and to the Colossians, “that the word which they had heard was by that time preached to every creature.” We know certainly that Paul preached the gospel in Rome; and such was the effect of his preaching that, seven years before the destruction of Jerusalem, Tacitus says there was an immense number of Christians in that city.† From the capital of the world the knowledge of Christianity was spread, like all the improvements in art and science, over the world; that is, according to the common sense of the phrase, throughout the Roman empire. When the whole known world was governed by one prince, the communication was easy. In every part of the empire garrisons were stationed—roads were opened—messengers were often passing—and no country then discovered was too distant to hear the gospel of the kingdom. It is generally agreed, that within the forty years which I mentioned, Scythia on the north, India on the east, Gaul and Egypt on the west, and Æthiopia on the south, had received the doctrine of Christ: and we know that the island of Britain, which was then regarded as the extremity of the earth, the most remote and savage province, was frequently visited during that time by Roman emperors and their generals. It is even said that the gospel was preached publicly in London ten years before the destruction of Jerusalem. As far, then, as our information goes, whether we collect it from the book of Acts, from the occasional mention made by heathen historians of a subject upon which they bestowed little attention, or from the concurring testimony of the oldest Christian historians, the word of Christ was literally fulfilled; and you have, in the short space of time to which he limits the fulfilment of this word, a striking proof of his prophetic spirit.

But it is not enough to attend to the fulfilment of this prophecy. The place which it holds, and the manner in which it is expressed,

* Acts viii. 1; xi. 19, 20.

† Tacit. Ann. lib. xv. 44.

suggest to us something further. The gospel, at whatever time it be published, is a witness to those who hear it, of the being, the providence, and the moral government of God. But, as it is said, "it shall be preached to all the world, for a witness to all nations, and then shall the end come," we are led to consider that particular kind of witness which the preaching of the gospel, before the end of the Jewish state, afforded to all nations; and it is here, I said, that there opens to us a most instructive and enlarged view of the economy of the divine dispensations.

Had it not been for this early and universal preaching, the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus would have appeared to the world an event of the same order with the destruction of any other city. They might have talked of the obstinacy of the besieged—of the fury of the conquerors—of the unexampled distress which was endured; but it would not have appeared to them that there was in all this any thing divine, any other warning than is suggested by the ordinary fortune of war. But when the gospel was first published, it was a witness to all nations, that in the end of the Jewish state there was a fulfilment of the prophecy—a punishment of infidelity—and the termination of the law of Moses.

1. It was a witness of the fulfilment of the prophecy. Wherever the first preachers of Christianity went, they carried the gospels along with them, as the authentic history of Him whom they preached. We have reason to think, that in many parts of the world the three gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, were translated into the language of the country, or into the Latin, which was generally understood, before Jerusalem was destroyed. The early Christians, then, in the most distant parts of the world, had in their hands the prophecy before the event. The Roman armies, and the messengers of the empire, would soon transmit a general account of the siege. The history of Josephus, written and published by the order of Vespasian and Titus, would transmit the particulars to some at least of the most illustrious commanders in distant provinces; and thus, while all who named the name of Christ would learn the fact, that Jerusalem was destroyed, they who were inquisitive might learn also the circumstances of the fact, and by comparing the narration which they received, with the prophecy of which they had been formerly in possession, would know assuredly that he who had uttered that prophecy was more than man. There are still great events to happen in the history of the Christian church, which we trust will bring to those who shall be permitted to see them, a full conviction of the divine character of Jesus. But it was wisely ordered, that the earliest Christians should receive this long prophecy before it came to pass, that the faith of those who had not seen the Lord's Christ, might, at a time when education, authority, and example, were not on the side of that faith, be confirmed by the event; and that all the singular circumstances of this siege might afford to the nations of the earth, in the beginnings of the gospel, a demonstration that Jesus spake the truth.

2. A witness of the punishment of infidelity. The destruction of Jerusalem was foretold, not merely to give an example of the divine knowledge of him who uttered the prophecy, but because the Jews deserved that destruction. The crime which brought it upon them is

intimated in many of our Lord's parables, and is declared clearly in other passages, so that those who were in possession of the prophecy could not mistake the cause. All the nations of the earth to whom the gospel was preached, knew that the Jews had killed the Lord Jesus with this horrid imprecation, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children;" that they had rejected all the evidences of the truth of Christianity which were exhibited in their own land, and not content with despising the gospel, had stirred up the minds of the heathen against the disciples of Jesus, and appeared, so long as their city existed, the most bitter enemies of the Christian name. The nations of the earth saw this obstinacy and barbarity recompensed in the very manner which the Author of the gospel foretold, and having his predictions in their hands, they beheld his enemies taken in the snare which he had announced. The mighty works which he did upon earth were miracles of mercy, by which he meant to win the hearts of mankind. But the execution of his threatenings against a nation of enemies was a miracle of judgment. And the unparalleled calamities which the Jews, according to his words, endured, were a warning from heaven to all that heard the gospel, not to reject the counsel of God against themselves.

3. A witness that, in the destruction of Jerusalem, there was the termination of the law of Moses. While many Jews persecuted the Christians, there were others who attempted by reasoning, to impose upon them an observance of the law of Moses. They said that it was impious to forsake an institution confessedly of divine original, and that no subsequent revelation could diminish the sanctity of a temple built by God, or abolish the offerings which he had required to be presented there. You find this reasoning most ably combated in the Epistles of Paul, and particularly in the Epistle to the Hebrews. But the arguments of the apostle did not completely counterbalance the evil done by the Judaizing teachers, to the cause of Christ. Many were disturbed by the sophistry of these men in the exercise of their Christian liberty; and many were deterred from embracing the gospel, by the fear of being brought under the yoke of the Jewish ceremonies. Some signal interposition of Providence was necessary to disjoin the spiritual universal religion of Jesus from the carnal local ordinances of the law of Moses, and to afford entire satisfaction to the minds of those who wished for that disjunction. The destruction of Jerusalem was that interposition; and the general publication of the gospel before that event, led men both to look for it as the solution of their doubts, and to rest in it after it happened, as the declaration from heaven that the ceremonial law was finished. The service of the temple could not continue after one stone of the temple was not left upon another; the tribes could no longer assemble at Jerusalem after the city was laid in ruins; and that bondage, under which the Jewish nation wished to bring the Christians, ceased after the Jews were scattered over the face of the earth.

And thus we are enabled, by the place which this prophecy holds, to mark a beautiful consistency, and a mutual dependency in the revelations with which God hath favoured the world,—the manifold wisdom of God conspicuous in the whole economy of religion. The Almighty committed to Abraham and his descendants the hope of the

Messiah, and the law was a school-master to bring men to Christ. When he who was the end of the law appeared, he appealed to Moses and the prophets as testifying of him, and he claimed the character of that prophet whom they had announced. But the purpose of the law being fulfilled by his appearance, it was no longer necessary that the preparatory dispensation with its appurtenances should continue. He gave notice, therefore, of the conclusion of the age of the law, and as that age began and was conducted with visible symbols of divine power, so with like symbols it was finished. The declaration of these symbols, published to the world in the gospels, prevented them from looking upon the event with the astonishment of ignorance, and taught them to connect this awful ending of the one age with the character of that age which then commenced. Having seen a period elapse sufficient for the faith of Christ to gain proselytes in many countries, they saw the temple of Jerusalem by an interposition which was the literal fulfilment of the words of Christ taken down, and were thus assured that the hour was indeed come at which ancient prophets had more obscurely hinted, and which Jesus had declared in express words as not very distant, when men were not to worship the Father at Jerusalem, but when the true worshippers, every one from his place, should worship God in spirit and in truth. The effect of the event, thus interpreted by the prophecy, was powerful and instantaneous. It furnished the earliest Christian fathers with an unanswerable argument against the Judaizing teachers: it solved the doubts of those who were stumbled by their reasonings: it removed one great objection which the Gentiles had to the gospel: and when the wall of partition was thus removed, numbers were "turned from idols to serve the living God."

7. I mentioned as the next subject of the predictions of Jesus, the condition of the Jewish nation subsequent to the destruction of their city.

You may mark first the immediate consequences of the siege. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven." It seems to be plain that these expressions point to the consequences of the siege, for they are thus introduced, "immediately after the tribulation of those days," *i. e.* the distress endured during the siege, and as if on purpose to show us that the event pointed at was not very distant, it is said a few verses after, "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." To perceive the propriety of using such expressions in this place, you will recollect that symbolical language of which we spoke formerly,—dictated by necessity in early times, when the conceptions and the words of men were few,—retained in after times partly from habit, and partly to render speech more significant,—universally used in eastern countries,—and abounding in the writings of the prophets, who, speaking under the influence of inspiration, full of the events which they foretold, and elevated above the ordinary tone of their minds, employ a richness and pomp of imagery which exalts our conceptions of the importance of what they say, but at the same time increases the obscurity natural to prophecies, and

made the people whom they addressed often call their discourses dark sayings. This eastern imagery, which pervades the prophetic style, is especially remarkable when the rise or fall of kingdoms is foretold. The images are then borrowed from the most splendid objects; and as in the ancient mode of writing by hieroglyphics, the sun, the moon, and stars, being bodies raised above the earth, were used to represent kingdoms and princes, so in the prophecies of their calamities, or prosperity, changes upon the heavenly bodies, bright light, and thick darkness came to be a common phraseology. Of the punishment which God was to inflict on Judea, he says by Jeremiah, "I will stretch out my hand against thee and destroy thee; she hath given up the ghost; her sun is gone down, while it is yet day."* Of Egypt, by Ezekiel, "All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and make darkness over thy land, saith the Lord God."† So by Joel, "The earth shall quake before them, the heavens shall tremble; the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining; and the Lord shall utter his voice before his army."‡ And when God promises deliverance and victory to his people, it is in these beautiful words, "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself. But the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold."§ It was most natural for the Messiah of the Jews to introduce this uniform language of former prophets in foretelling the dissolution of their state; and all that he says was fulfilled, according to the appropriated use of that language, immediately after the siege. For the city was desolated; the temple was burnt; that ecclesiastical constitution which the Romans had tolerated after Judea became a province of the empire was dissolved; the Sanhedrim no longer assembled; the office of the High Priest could no more be exercised according to the commandment of God; every privilege which had distinguished the people of the Jews ceased; the sceptre, in appearance as well as in reality, departed from Judah, and the very forms of the dispensation given by Moses came to an end.

As changes upon the kingdoms of the earth are produced by the all-ruling providence of God, so the ancient prophets often represent him in their figurative language, as coming in the clouds of heaven to execute vengeance upon a guilty nation; and Daniel applies this language|| to the exertion of the power of the Son of Man, when he was to take away the dominion of the four beasts whom Daniel had seen in his vision, and to give the kingdom to the saints of the Most High. You find our Lord referring to this expression, which was familiar to every Jew. Immediately after the distress of the siege, you shall see the sign of the Son of man in heaven. The sign which you have been taught to look for, is not a comet, or meteor, a wonderful appearance in the air to astonish the ignorant: it is the Son of man employing the Roman armies as his servants, to execute vengeance upon those who crucified him, and demonstrating to the world, by the complete dissolution of the Jewish state, that all power is committed to him.

* Jer. xv. 6. 9.

† Ezek. xxxii. 8.

‡ Joel ii. 10, 11.

§ Isaiah lx. 20; xxx. 26.

|| Dan. vii. 13, 14, 27.

The first part, then, of our Lord's prophecy concerning the condition of the Jewish people, subsequent to the siege, although expressed in sublime and figurative language, may be understood, by the analogy of the prophetic style, to mean, that the political and ecclesiastical constitution of Judea was to be annihilated immediately after that event.

But you may observe in Luke another prophecy concerning their condition, reaching to a remote period, and marking events in their nature, most contingent. "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."* Not only shall the city be taken, and the constitution be dissolved, and many Jews fall by the edge of the sword, and many be led captive into all nations; but Jerusalem shall belong to the Gentiles, and be used by them in a contemptuous manner till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. As this prediction, when taken in connexion with other passages of Scripture, means a great deal more than is obvious at first sight, and as the present state of the Jews is one of the strongest visible arguments for the truth of Christianity, I shall lay before you the history of Jerusalem since it was taken, the condition of the Jewish people during the desolation of their city, and that prospect of a better time which is intimated in the concise expression of our Lord.

The history of Jerusalem from the time of its being destroyed by Titus till this day, is a literal fulfilment of the expression, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles." The emperor Adrian conceived the design of rebuilding Jerusalem about forty-seven years after its destruction. He planted a Roman colony there, and in place of the temple of the God of the Jews, he erected a temple to Jupiter. The Jews, who inhabited the other parts of Judea, inflamed by this insulting act of sacrilege, engaged in open rebellion against the Romans, and assembling in vast multitudes, got possession of their city, and kept it for a short time. But Adrian soon expelled them, demolished their towns and castles, desolated the land of Judea, and scattered those who survived over the face of the earth. He re-established the Roman colony in Jerusalem, gave it a new name, and forbade any Jew to enter it. Three hundred years after the death of our Saviour, Constantine, the first Roman emperor who embraced Christianity, built many splendid Christian churches in this Roman colony, and dispersed the Jews who attempted to disturb the Christians in their worship. Within thirty years after the death of Constantine, the Emperor Julian, who is known by the name of the Apostate, because, although he had been bred a Christian, he became a heathen, out of hatred to the Christians, and with a view to defeat the prophecy, invited the body of the Jewish people scattered through the empire, to return to their city; and professing to lament the oppression which they had endured, gave orders for rebuilding their temple. His lieutenants did begin. But, says the Roman historian Ammianus Marcellinus, whose respectable authority there is no reason in this instance to question, balls of fire, bursting forth near the foundation, made it impossible for the workmen to approach the place, and the enterprise was laid aside.† Julian did not reign above two years; and as all the emperors who succeeded him were Christians, no at-

* Luke xxi. 24.

† Amm. Marcel. lib. xxiii.

tempt was ever made to rebuild the temple, and the Jews were prohibited from living in the city. It was only by stealth, or by bribing the guards, that they obtained a sight of the ruins of their temple. In the year 637, Jerusalem was taken by the successors of the great impostor Mahomet. A mosque was built upon the very spot where the temple of Solomon had stood; and this mosque was afterwards so much enlarged and beautified, that it became the resort of the Mahometans in the adjoining countries, in the same manner as the temple had been of the Jews. Since that time, it has passed, in the succession of conquests made by different nations and tribes, through the hands of the Turks, the Egyptians, and the Mamelukes. It was for some time in possession of Christians, who, having marched from Europe at the era of the Crusades, to deliver their brethren in the holy land from oppression, and to rescue the sepulchre of our Lord out of the hands of the Mahometans, took Jerusalem, and established a kingdom which lasted about a century. The Christian forces were at length expelled; the Mamelukes, and after them the Ottoman Turks regained the city, and till this day the Mahometan worship is established there. Christians who are drawn thither by reverence for the place where our Lord lay, are admitted to reside; and their worship is tolerated upon their paying a large tribute. But hardly any Jews are to be seen in the city. They consider it as so much defiled by the Mahometans and Christians, that they choose rather to worship God in any other place; they are persecuted by the reigning power. And the poverty of the city does not afford them much temptation in the way of gain to counterbalance the inconveniencies to which they would be obliged to submit if they attempted to live there. Jerusalem, then, is still trodden down of the Gentiles. During the seventeen hundred years that have elapsed since it was destroyed by Titus, the Jews have never been quietly settled there. It has, with hardly any interruption, belonged to Gentile nations; and it has received every thing which the Jews account a pollution.

You will attend next to the condition of the Jewish people during this desolation of their city. Amongst the many striking circumstances in the history of the ancient Jews, every intelligent observer will reckon the frequent dispersions of that unhappy people. Most other nations, when subdued by a warlike or powerful neighbour, have continued to inhabit some portion of their ancient territory. They have either adopted the laws and manners of their conquerors, and in process of time have been so completely incorporated with them, as not to form a distinct body, or if the cruel policy of the conquerors marked out for them a humbler station, they have descended from their former rank of freemen, without changing their climate, and have remained as servants in the land of which they were once the masters. But the conquerors of Judea in all ages, not content with the subjection of the inhabitants, transplanted them into other countries, and in distant lands marked out the cities which they were to possess, and the fields which they were to cultivate. Thus Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, took away the ten tribes of Israel, and planted them beyond the river Euphrates, in the cities of the Medes. Nebuchadnezzar, one hundred and thirty years after, carried the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin captive to Babylon; and the Romans

also at a later period led the Jews captive into all nations. Whatever were the motives which led the enemies of the Jews to adopt this singular system of policy, in following it out, they only fulfilled the appointment of heaven: and the kings of Assyria and Babylon, and the emperors of Rome, although they meant it not so in their hearts, yet by the peculiar sufferings which they brought upon the captive nation, were the instruments of accomplishing the prophecies contained in its sacred books. Moses, amongst other curses which were to overtake the children of Israel in case of disobedience, mentions this: "I will make thy cities waste, and I will bring the land into desolation; and thine enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. The Lord shall bring against thee a nation from far, and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down. And ye shall be plucked off the land whither thou goest to possess it; and the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other."* The frequent captivities and dispersions of the Jews corresponded exactly to the words of the curse; and this singular punishment has been repeated as often as the sins of the nation called for the judgments of heaven.

It might have been expected that, by these frequent dispersions, the whole race of the Jews would be confounded amongst other nations. But it is most remarkable, that although distinguished from all other people by being scattered over the face of the earth, they remain distinguished also by their religion and customs; and although every where found, they are every where separated from those around them. I speak not of the ten tribes carried away by Esarhaddon, who were so far estranged from the true God before they left their own land, that they easily adopted the idolatry of the nations to which they were led captive, and so ceased to be a people.† But I speak of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, composing what was properly called the kingdom of Judah, which adhered to the family of David after Israel had rebelled against them, to which the promise of the Messiah had been restricted by the patriarch Jacob, and in which the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the fortunes of the Jewish nation is to be looked for. Now we know that when Judah was carried captive by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon, the captives did not worship the gods of the conquerors. Daniel and other great men were raised up by God to preserve the spirit of piety, and the fortitude of the servants of heaven. And by a concurrence of circumstances which the providence of God combined to fulfil his pleasure, those who were for the God of Israel received an invitation to return to Jerusalem, and to rebuild the temple. The edict of Cyrus king of Persia contained these words:‡ "The Lord of heaven hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem. Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the Lord God of Israel." It was under the character of the servants of God, by which character they were distinguished from their idolatrous neighbours, that the Jews returned; and the calamities which they had endured

* Levit. xxvi. 31, 32; Deut. xxviii. passim.

† Buchanan's Christian Researches.

‡ Ezra i. 2, 3.

during their captivity, seem to have cured that proneness to idolatry, which the more ancient prophets so often reprove. All that returned are spoken of in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah as zealous for the worship of the true God. Their descendants, who settled and multiplied in the Holy Land, never showed any inclination to worship idols. They endured a severe persecution under Antiochus, because they would not submit to the worship which he prescribed; and one of the causes which incensed the Romans against them, was their abhorrence of the gods of the empire. Since their dispersion by Titus and by Adrian, they have never joined in heathen, Christian, or Mahometan worship. Their rites, burdensome as they are, and contemptible as they appear in the eyes of strangers, have been religiously observed by the whole nation. A sullen, uncomplaining covetous spirit has conspired with the singularity of their rites to render them odious and ridiculous. The character of a Jew is marked in every corner of the earth; and one can find no words which so literally express the condition of this people, as the words uttered more than three thousand years ago by their own lawgiver. "These curses shall come upon thee for a sign and for a wonder, and upon thy seed for ever; and thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word among all the nations whither the Lord shall lead thee."* In this wonderful manner have the Jews, whose native land is still trodden down of the Gentiles, been preserved in all parts of the earth a distinct people.

But the prediction brings into our view the prospect of a better time: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, till the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled;" which, in plain grammatical construction, implies, that when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, Jerusalem shall no longer be trodden down. Our Lord is referring to the latter part of Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks: "The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a flood; and—he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate;" or, as I am assured by the best authority, it may be rendered, "upon the desolator."† Now this consummation, what the Septuagint calls ἡ συντελευτα του καιρου, is to be learned from other parts of the book of Daniel, in which there is a most circumstantial prophecy of the fate of the great empires of the world, and amongst the rest of the empire of the Romans, who were the desolators of Judea.‡ A great part of that prophecy has been fulfilled. Learned men have traced so striking a coincidence between the words of Daniel and the history of the world, as is sufficient to impress every candid mind with the divine inspiration of this prophet, highly favoured of the Lord, and to beget a full conviction, that every word which he has spoken will in due time be accomplished. When that will be, or how it will be, we know not. But as the events that have already happened have reflected the clearest light upon former parts of the prophecy, we may rest assured that the end, when it arrives, will explain those parts which are still dark, and that there are methods in reserve, by which the times of the

* Deut. xxviii. 37. 46.

† Dan. ix. 26, 27.

‡ Dan. ii. and vii.

Gentiles, that which is determined upon the desolator, all the purposes of God's providence respecting the kingdoms which have arisen out of the Roman empire, shall be fulfilled. It is perfectly agreeable to our Lord's words, to consider the return of the Jews to their own land as connected with this end, the fulfilment of the times of the Gentiles: and when we take into our view other parts of scripture, hardly any doubt is left in our minds that this was his meaning. Moses, when he threatens the Jews with dispersion, gives notice, that if, in their captivity, they returned to the Lord, he would gather them from the nations to which he had scattered them: "And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God."* You find this hope expressed by David, by Solomon, by Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Accordingly the two tribes who remembered the God of their fathers, in fulfilment of this promise, as Nehemiah interprets their deliverance, were gathered from their captivity. After their return, the same threatenings of dispersion were denounced against them if they disobeyed, and the same promises of being brought back if they repented. Zechariah, who prophesied after the return, says, "I will gather all nations against Jerusalem, and the city shall be taken." But he says also, the day is coming when "I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication."† And this is agreeable to the words of more ancient prophets; for God says by Jeremiah, "Though I make a full end of all the nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee;"‡ and by Amos, "I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled out of the land which I have given them."§ These prophecies, and many others of the same import, open to our view a time when the Jews are to be brought back from captivity. Their return from Babylon, which was a fulfilment of their own prophecies, is a pledge that the greater promise of an everlasting settlement in their own land shall be fulfilled also. Their being to this day a distinct people, separate from all others, renders the fulfilment of the prophecy possible, and seems intended as a standing miracle to keep alive in the world the faith of this event. Our Lord, at the very time when he foretells the destruction of the holy city, and the second long captivity of the Jews, intimates, by his mode of expression, that it was not to be perpetual; and his apostle Paul, to whom Jesus, after his ascension, revealed the whole counsel of God, delights to dwell upon this thought—"I would not, brethren," he says to the Romans, "that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, that blindness in part has happened to Israel, till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved."||

What a glorious view is here presented of the universal kingdom of the Messiah, which is at length to comprehend even the children of those who slew him! What a consistency and grandeur in the conduct of divine Providence with regard to the Jews, that people

* Levit. xxvi. 44.

† Zech. xiv. 2 : xii. 9, 10.

‡ Jer. xxx. 11.

§ Amos ix. 15.

|| Rom. xi. 25.

whom God formed for himself to show forth his praise ! Raised up at first as a light in a dark place—retaining the knowledge and worship of the true God amidst the idolatry of the nations—keeping in their oracles the hope of the Saviour of mankind—carrying by their dispersions these oracles, this knowledge and hope, through the whole earth, and thus rendering the Messiah the desire of all nations—exhibiting in their singular misfortunes the holiness and the power of their God—a monument to the world in their present state, that Jesus is able to take vengeance of his enemies—and yet preserved, even in the midst of that punishment which they endure for obstinacy and infidelity, to receive Christ as a nation, and thus to be the future instruments of the conversion of the whole world ! When this people, by the out-stretched arm of the Almighty, shall be brought back in his time from the lands where they now sojourn, to that land which, in the beginning, he chose for them, and Jerusalem, which is now trodden down of the Gentiles, shall be delivered to the Jews ; when every prophecy in their books shall be found to conspire most exactly with the words spoken by Christ and his apostles, and all shall receive a striking accomplishment in events most interesting to the whole universe—what eye will be so sealed as to exclude this light, what mind so hardened as not to yield to a conviction which the infinite knowledge and power of God will then appear to have united in producing ! Every charge of partiality in the Lord of nature, which the superficial infidel is hasty to bring forward, shall then be swallowed up in the full exposition of that great scheme which is now carrying forward for the final salvation of all the children of God, and every tongue will join in that expression of exalted devotion with which the Apostle Paul shuts up this subject—“ O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor ? ” *

8. I mentioned, as the last subject of our Lord’s prophecies, the final discrimination of the righteous and the wicked at the day of judgment. This great event is foretold under similitudes, in plain words, without hesitation, with solemnity, with minuteness. The veil is in some measure removed, and we, whose views are generally confined to the events of the little spot which we inhabit, are enabled by the great Prophet to look forward to the end of the world. He has, indeed, hidden the time from our eyes, but he has minutely described every other circumstance. The clearness of his predictions upon such a subject distinguishes him from every other teacher who had appeared before his time, and affords a presumption of his divine character. But this is not the place for enlarging upon these predictions, and I mention them at present only to state the connection between them and the prophecy which we have been considering. The darkening of the sun, and moon, and stars—the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven—his sending forth his angels with a trumpet, and gathering his elect from the four winds ; all these circumstances bring to our minds a day more awful and important than the destruction of Jerusalem, or any of its immediate consequences. And

* Rom. xi. 33, 34.

although it is possible, and agreeable to the analogy of Scripture language, to find a meaning for the various expressions here used, in the dissolution of the Jewish state, in the general publication of the gospel after that event, and the great accession of converts which it contributed to bring to Christianity—yet we know that these are the very expressions by which our Lord and his apostles have described that day, when all who have lived upon the face of the earth shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Several commentators have been of opinion that there is here, in addition to the prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, a direct prophecy of the day of judgment. But the limitation of the time of the fulfilment to the existence of the generation then alive, is an unanswerable objection to this opinion; and, therefore, I consider the latter part of this prediction as a specimen given by our Lord of a prophecy with a double sense. We found that, in the Old Testament, the language of the prophet is often so contrived as to apply at once to two events, the one near and local, the other remote and universal. Thus David, in describing his own sufferings, introduces expressions which are a literal description of the sufferings of the Messiah, and are applied as such by the Evangelists; and the words in which he paints the peaceful reign of Solomon, received a literal accomplishment in the kingdom of the Prince of Peace. So here the Messiah, who often, in other respects, copies the manner, and refers to the words of ancient prophets, while he is immediately foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem, looks forward to the day of judgment, and expresses himself in a language which, although, by the established practice of the prophets, it is applicable in a figurative sense to the fall of a city and the dissolution of a state, yet in its true, literal, precise meaning, applies to that day in which all cities and states are equally interested. While the fulfilment then of the direct sense of this prophecy is a standing proof of the divine knowledge of Jesus, it is also a pledge, that the secondary sense shall in due time be accomplished; and thus the exhortation with which our Lord concludes this prophecy, and which is manifestly expressed in such a manner, as shows that it was intended for his disciples in every age, is enforced upon us as well as upon those that heard him. The Christians were delivered from the destruction in which their countrymen were involved, by following the directions of Jesus; and upon our watchfulness and obedience to him depend our comfort, our improvement, and the salvation of our souls, in the great day of the Lord.

Josephus, Hurd, and Commentaries on the 24th chapter of Matthew, in the works of Tilotson, Jortin, Newton, Newcome, &c.

CHAPTER VIII.

RESURRECTION OF CHRIST.

MANY of the principal facts in the Christian religion may be introduced as instances of the fulfilment of the prophecies of Jesus, and as thus serving to illustrate the abundant measure in which the spirit of prophecy was given to that Great Prophet who had been announced from the beginning of the world. But two of these facts deserve a more particular consideration in a view of the evidences of Christianity, because, independently of their having been foretold, they bring a very strong confirmation to the high claim advanced in the Scriptures. The two facts which I mean are, the resurrection of Jesus, and the propagation of Christianity.

The first of these facts is the resurrection of Jesus. Had he never returned from the grave, his enemies would have considered his death as the completion of their triumph: and those who had admired his character, and had been convinced by his works that he was a teacher sent from God, must have considered his blood as only adding to the sum of all the righteous blood that had been shed upon the earth. His friends might have made a feeble attempt to transmit, with distinguished honour to posterity, the name of Jesus of Nazareth as a prophet mighty in word and in deed. Yet even they would have been stumbled when they recollected his pretensions and his prophecies. He had claimed a character and an authority very inconsistent with the notion of his being a victim to the malice of men; and he had foretold that after being three days, that is, according to the Jewish phraseology, a part of three days in the grave, he would rise from the dead on the third day: resting the truth of his claim upon this fact as the sign that was to be given. The resurrection of Jesus, then, is not merely an important, it is an essential fact in the history of Christianity. If the author of this religion did not return from the grave, he is, according to his own confession, an impostor: if he did, all who are satisfied with the evidence of this singular fact, must acknowledge, from the nature of the case, that he was the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead.

It behoves you to examine with particular care the kind of evidence upon which the wisdom of God has chosen to rest a fact so essential. To the apostles, who were with Jesus when he was apprehended, who knew certainly that he was crucified, one of whom saw him on the cross, and all of whom were permitted to converse with him after he was risen, his resurrection was as much an object of sense, at least it was an inference as clearly deducible from what

they did see, as if they had been present when the angel rolled the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and when Jesus came forth in the same manner as Lazarus had done a little before at his command. But this evidence of sense could not extend beyond the forty days during which Jesus remained upon earth. And the first thing that meets you, in an inquiry into the truth of the resurrection, is the number of persons to whom this evidence of sense was vouchsafed. The time is limited. But there is no necessary limitation of the number that might have seen Jesus during that time, and, as the faith of future ages must in a great measure rest upon their testimony, it is natural to consider whether there be any thing in the particular number to whom this evidence of sense was confined, that serves to render the fact incredible.

The number is much greater than will appear at first sight to a careless reader of the gospels. The soldiers, the women, and the disciples only are mentioned there. But you will find it said, that Jesus went before his disciples into Galilee, where he had appointed them to meet him; and one of the appearances narrated by John is said to have been at the sea of Tiberias, which lay in Galilee. Now Galilee was the country where our Lord had spent the greatest part of his life, where his person was perfectly well known, where his mother's relations and the families of the apostles resided. His going to Galilee, therefore, after his resurrection, was giving to a number of persons deeply interested in the fact, an opportunity of being convinced by their own senses that the Lord was risen indeed, and thus crowned those evidences of his divine mission which they had derived from their former acquaintance with him. Accordingly, Paul says, that our Lord "was seen of above five hundred brethren at once," which must have happened in Galilee, for the number of disciples in Jerusalem after the ascension was but "an hundred and twenty." The testimony of this multitude of witnesses in Galilee was sufficient to diffuse through their neighbours and contemporaries a conviction of the fact which they saw.

But, it has been asked, Why did Jesus retire to a remote province, and show himself at Jerusalem only to a few witnesses? Why did he not appear openly in the temple, in the synagogue, in the streets of the holy city, as he was accustomed to do before his death, and overpower the incredulity of the Jews by an ocular demonstration of his divine power? It is admitted that he did not show himself to all the people. But the objection arising from this supposed deficiency in the evidence, has been completely answered by some of the best commentators upon the New Testament, and by writers in the deistical controversy. The heads of the answers are these. The Jewish nation, who had resisted all the evidences of our Lord's divine mission which were exhibited before their eyes during his ministry, were not entitled to expect that any further means should be employed by heaven for their conviction. The probability is, that the same narrow views and evil passions which had produced their unbelief while he lived, would have rendered his appearance in their city after his death ineffectual. Our Lord, who foresaw this inefficacy, seems to suggest it as the reason of his conduct in this matter, when he concludes one of his parables with saying, "If they hear not Moses and

the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." After our Lord spake these words, the experiment was made in the case of Lazarus. Many of the neighbours of Mary might know certainly that her brother had been raised by the power of Jesus. Yet some of them who had seen all things that were done, went and told the Pharisees; and the Pharisees, upon the report of this miracle, took counsel to put Jesus to death. It was not meet that his own resurrection should give occasion to similar plots again to take away his life. To all this it is to be added in the last place, that, whatever reception Jesus had met with in Jerusalem, the evidence for Christianity might have been injured by his appearing there after his resurrection. Had the Jews continued to reject and persecute him, the united testimony of the nation against the resurrection might have been represented as sufficient to outweigh the positive testimony of the apostles. Had they received him as their Messiah after he was risen, the Christian religion might have been represented as a state-trick devised by able men for the glory of the nation, which met with opposition at first, but to the faith of which, a well-concerted story of the death and resurrection of its author did at last subdue the minds of the people. From this specimen of the answers which may be made to the objection, it appears that God tries the honesty of our hearts by the methods which he employs to enlighten our reason, that the evidence of religion was not intended to overpower those whose minds are perverted, but to satisfy those who love the truth, and that, in examining any branch of that evidence, our business is not to inquire what God might have done, but to consider what he has done, and to rest on those facts which appear to our understanding to be sufficiently proven, although our imagination may figure other proofs by which they are not supported.

Having seen that the objection suggested by the limitation of the number of those who saw Jesus after his resurrection, may easily be answered, I proceed to state the different kinds of evidence which we, in these later ages, have for the truth of this fact. They are three. The traditionary evidence arising from the universal diffusion of the belief of this fact through the Christian world—the clear testimony of the apostles recorded in their writings—and the extraordinary powers conferred upon the apostles.

The lowest degree of evidence which we enjoy for the resurrection of Jesus, is that kind of traditionary evidence which arises from the universal diffusion of the belief of this fact through the Christian world. It appears from the earliest Christian writers, that it was the general faith of all who named the name of Christ, that he had risen from the dead. We are told that the first Christians, in that exultation of mind of which our familiarity with the great truths of religion makes it difficult for us to form a just conception, were accustomed to salute one another when they met with this expression, *Χριστός ἀνέστη*; and the first day of the week, which, from the beginning of the Christian church was called *Κυριακή ἡμέρα*, and in all parts of the Christian world has been observed as the day upon which the followers of Jesus assemble for the exercises of devotion, is a standing unequivocal memorial of the truth of the fact which upon that day especially is remembered. It is impossible to conceive how so extraordinary a

fact should have been so universally propagated, if it had not been founded in the certain uncontradicted knowledge of those who lived near the time. But, strong as this presumption may justly be held, the faith of future ages in so essential a fact required a more determinate support. And this is found in

The clear precise testimony of the apostles, those witnesses chosen before of God, who did eat and drink with Jesus after he rose from the dead ; a testimony transmitted to us in the authentic genuine record of discourses that were delivered before his murderers in the city where he suffered, six weeks after he rose ; and of other discourses, and histories, and epistles, in which eye-witnesses declare what they had seen, and heard, and handled of the word of life. To this office Jesus separated the apostles, when he called them, as soon as he began to teach, to be always with him ; and when he said to them a little before his death, " Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning ;" and a little before his ascension, " Ye shall be witnesses unto me to the uttermost parts of the earth." The apostles had this apprehension of the nature of their office ; for when the place of Judas was to be supplied, Peter says to the disciples, " Of these men that have companied with us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection." And to Paul, who was an apostle " born out of due time," Jesus appeared from heaven, that he might also be a witness of the things which he had seen.

You may mark here an uniformity in the evidence of Christianity. The same persons, who are to us the witnesses of the signs which Jesus did in the presence of his disciples, are witnesses also of his having risen from the dead. In both cases they do not declare opinions upon doubtful points, but they attest palpable facts, level to the apprehension of the plainest understanding ; and their clear unambiguous testimony to the miracles and the resurrection of Jesus, in which they agreed with themselves and with one another till the end, is written in the same books, that we may believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God.

We are thus led back to those circumstances which were formerly stated as giving credibility in our days to the miracles of Jesus ; such as the character of the apostles, the scene of danger and suffering in which their testimony was given, the fortitude with which they adhered to it, and that simplicity, that air of truth, which pervades the evangelical history, and which falsehood cannot uniformly preserve. All these circumstances are common to the record of the miracles and to the record of the resurrection. But there are some internal marks of truth in the history of the resurrection, which are peculiarly fitted to impress conviction upon all who are capable of apprehending them. I shall mention the three following. The history of the resurrection, published during the life of the witnesses of that event, relates the consternation which it excited amongst the enemies of Jesus, the awkward attempts which they made to affix the charge of imposture upon the disciples, and the currency of that report among the Jews at the time of the publication of the history. Again, the historians exhibit the prejudices of the apostles, their slowness of heart to be-

lieve, the natural manner in which their doubts were overcome, and the combination of circumstances by which a firm belief of the resurrection was established in the minds of the witnesses, and a foundation was laid for the faith of succeeding ages. There are, lastly, that apparent imperfection and inaccuracy in the several accounts of this transaction, and those seeming contradictions, which render it impossible for any person to believe that there was a collusion amongst the evangelists in framing their story, and which yet are of such a kind, that the ingenuity of learned men, by attending to minute and delicate circumstances which escape ordinary observers, has formed out of the four narrations a consistent, probable account of the whole transaction. It is not possible for me to enlarge upon these points. But they are so essential to this most interesting article of our faith, that they deserve your closest study. And for that purpose I recommend to you the four following books, which every student of divinity ought to read. The first is Ditton on the Resurrection. One part of this book is a general view of the nature of moral evidence, and of the obligation which lies upon every reasonable being to assent to certain degrees of moral evidence; the other part is an application of this general view to the testimony upon which the resurrection of Christ is received; and is calculated to show that this testimony has all the qualifications of an evidence obligatory to the human understanding. The second book is known by the name of the Trial of the Witnesses. There are a judge, a jury, and pleaders upon both sides of the question. The arguments are summed up by the judge, and the jury are unanimous in their verdict that the apostles were not guilty of bearing false witness in their testimony of the resurrection. The form of the book, as well as the excellence of the matter, has rendered it popular; and it will be particularly useful to you by making you acquainted with the objections and the heads of the answers. The third is, Gilbert West's Observation upon the History of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, which you will find both as a separate book and also inserted in Watson's Tracts. This masterly writer lays together the several narrations, so as to form a consistent account of the whole transaction. He gives a very full view, first, of the order and the matter of that evidence which was laid before the apostles, and then of the arguments which induce us, in this remote age, to receive that evidence. His book, according to this plan, not only places in the strongest light those internal marks of credibility by which the history of the resurrection is distinguished, but also embraces most of the arguments for the truth of Christianity. The fourth is Cook's Illustration of the General Evidence of the Resurrection of Christ, a work which displays much acuteness, and a degree of novelty in the manner of stating that evidence. Even Dr. Priestley, an author whom I frequently mention in the following parts of my course, but whose name I seldom have occasion to quote in support of any doctrine of the Christian religion, and whose creed Mr. Gibbon has well called a scanty one, has said in one of his latest publications, "The resurrection of our Saviour, being the most extraordinary of all events, the evidence of it is remarkably circumstantial, in consequence of which, there is not perhaps any fact in all ancient

history so perfectly credible, according to the most established rules of evidence, as it is.”*

Besides the universal tradition in the Christian church, and the written testimony of the apostles, there is yet a third ground upon which we believe the resurrection of Christ.

“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater ;” and that witness was given in the extraordinary powers which were conferred upon the apostles before they began to execute their commission, and which continued with them always. I stated these powers formerly as the fulfilment of prophecy. But they present themselves at this place as the vouchers of the testimony of the apostles ; and in this light they are uniformly stated both by our Lord and by the witnesses themselves. He said to them before his death, “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, he shall testify of me ;” and “he will convince the world of sin, because they believe not on me.”† Again, a little before his ascension, he said, “Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses to me.”‡ Peter, in one of his first sermons, speaking of the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus, says, “We are his witnesses of these things ; and so is also the Holy Ghost whom God hath given to them that obey him.”§ The word translated comforter, in the first passage that I quoted, is *παράκλητος*, which exactly corresponds in etymology to the Latin word *advocatus*, from which comes our word advocate, a person called in to stand by another in a court of justice, to assist him in pleading his cause, and confuting his adversaries. The apostles spake before kings and governors, before the whole world, bearing witness to the resurrection of Christ. But lest they should be confounded by the subtlety, or overwhelmed by the power of their enemies, here is a divine person promised to confirm what they said, and to join with them in convincing the world of their sin in rejecting Jesus, and of his righteousness, that although he had been condemned as a malefactor, he was accounted righteous in the sight of God. His own works were the evidence, to which he always appealed in his lifetime, that God was with him ; and when he left the earth, the works which he enabled his servants to perform, the same in kind with his own, were the evidence that he had returned to his Father. “Therefore,” says Peter on the day of Pentecost, “being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.”||

Here is another instance of that uniformity which we have often occasion to mark in the evidence of Christianity ; the same divine attestation of the servants of Jesus as of himself ; the same proof of his resurrection from the dead, as of the high claim which he advanced when he was alive. “The works which I do,” he said, “bear witness that the Father hath sent me ; and the works which I do, shall ye my apostles do also, because I go to my Father.” We are thus led back to the amount of the argument from miracles, in order to perceive the nature of that confirmation which this testimony of the

* Hist. of Early Opinions, iv. 19.

§ Acts v. 32.

† John xv. 26 ; xvi. 8, 9.

|| Acts ii. 33.

‡ Acts i. 8.

Spirit gives to the testimony of the apostles. If there be an almighty Ruler of the universe, who has established what we call the laws of nature, and who can suspend them at his pleasure; and if this almighty Ruler be a God of truth, who takes an interest in the happiness of his reasonable offspring, it is impossible that the apostles of Jesus could be invested with powers, the exertion of which was fitted to convince every candid observer of the truth of an imposture; and, therefore, since signs and wonders far beyond the measure of human power are ascribed to the apostles in authentic histories published at the time, in epistles addressed by themselves to the witnesses of those signs, and in the writings of authors nearly contemporary; since no attempt was made to disprove the facts at the time when the imposture might have been easily exposed, and since the signs were expressly wrought in confirmation of this assertion of the apostles, that their Master was risen from the dead, we are constrained by the strongest moral evidence to believe that that assertion was true.

It is impossible for words to make this argument plainer. But there are some particulars which may illustrate the economy of the divine dispensation in conferring these extraordinary powers, and the connection which they have with the other branches of the evidence for Christianity.

The day upon which our Lord rose was the day after that Sabbath which was the passover, *i. e.* it was the first day of the week, the Jewish Sabbath being the seventh; and it was called in the Levitical law, the wave-offering. Pentecost was the *πεντηκοστή ἡμέρα*, the 50th day from the wave-offering. It was therefore also the first day of the week, and it was a day upon which all the males of Judea were supposed to be present before the Lord in Jerusalem. Our Lord remained forty days upon earth after his resurrection, and he probably spent the greatest part of that time in Galilee. But he was in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem upon the fortieth day, for he ascended from Mount Olivet.* The apostles, who probably would feel it to be their duty as Jews to be present at the approaching festival, were commanded by their Master not to depart from Jerusalem till they received the promise of the Father: for, said he, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

Accordingly the eleven returned from the mount, where they had witnessed the ascension, to Jerusalem, and continued quietly with the disciples in prayer and supplication. We have reason to think that they did not appear in public; and we do not read of any other transaction but filling up the Apostolical College, till the day of Pentecost, the tenth day after the ascension, when, being "all with one accord in one place, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." The gift of tongues was the first that was exercised, because it was suited to the occasion. Devout Jews and proselytes were assembled, from respect to the festival, out of all countries. To every one in his own tongue, the apostles, inspired with fortitude, another gift of the Spirit, spoke the wonderful works of God. And Peter explained the appearance which excited their wonder, to be the attestation which, in fulfilment of their own prophecies, God was now bearing to the re-

* Luke xxiv. 50; Acts i. 12.

urrection of the Messiah, whom, after all the works that he had done in the midst of them, their rulers had crucified, but whom God had exalted. You can thus trace, in the time of conferring these powers, the wise adjustment of means to an end. You see the silence and quietness, which had been maintained after the death of Christ, abundantly compensated by the public manner in which the gospel is first preached. The apostles are directed to submit their claim to the examination of the greatest multitude that could be assembled at Jerusalem; and the report, which this multitude would carry to their own countries of so extraordinary an appearance, was employed as an instrument of preparing many different parts of the world for the preaching of the apostles, who were soon to visit them. The powers themselves are delineated in the Acts and in the Epistles. You read of the word of wisdom, *i. e.* a clear comprehensive view of the Christian scheme—the word of knowledge, probably the faculty of tracing the connection between the Jewish and Christian dispensation—prophecy, either the applying of the prophecies in the Old Testament, or the foretelling future events—healing—the gift of tongues—the gift of interpreting tongues—and the gift of discerning spirits, that is, perceiving the true character of men under the disguise which they assumed, so as to be able to detect impostors.* There is a variety in these gifts corresponding to all the possible occasions of the teachers of this new religion. Some of them, being external and visible, were the signs and pledges of those which, although invisible, were not less necessary. Some of them were disseminated through the Christian church, and the gifts of healing and of tongues were often conferred by the hands of the apostles upon believers. This abundance of miraculous gifts was proper at that time, to demonstrate to the world the fulness of those treasures which were dispensed by the Lord Jesus, the dignity with which he had invested his apostles, and the obligation which lay upon all Christians to receive his word at their mouth. It was proper to rouse the attention of the world to a new religion, to overcome those considerations of prudence which made them unwilling to forsake the religion of their fathers, and to inspire them with steadfastness in the faith. It was proper also to remove the prejudices which the Jews entertained against the heathen, and to satisfy those who boasted of the privileges of the law, that God had received the Gentiles. Cornelius and his kinsmen and his friends were the first uncircumcised persons to whom the gospel was preached. They of the circumcision who believed were astonished when they saw the gift of the Holy Ghost poured out upon them, and heard them speak with tongues. Peter considered this as his warrant to baptize them: and when he reported it afterwards to the apostles and brethren at Jerusalem, they no longer blamed what he had done, but “held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”

This abundance of miraculous gifts, which so many reasons rendered proper at the first appearance of Christianity, was gradually withdrawn as the occasions ceased. We have no reason to think

* 1 Cor. xii. 8—10.

that any but the apostles had the power of conferring such gifts upon others. We are not indeed warranted to say that miraculous gifts were never visible in any who had not received them from the hands of the apostles. But we know that in the succeeding generations they became more rare. And when we were speaking of this subject formerly, we found writers in the third, and beginning of the fourth century, acknowledging that only some vestiges of such gifts remained in their days.

If you lay together the several particulars which have been mentioned respecting the economy of these miraculous gifts, it will appear that as, from their nature, they were the unquenchable witnesses of the Spirit, confirming the testimony which the apostles bore to the resurrection of their Master; so, in the manner of their being conferred, every wise observer may trace the finger of God. There is none of that waste which betrays ostentation, none of that scantiness or delay which implies a defect of power, no circumstance unworthy of the divine author of them; but the wisdom and power of God are united in the cause of the Gospel, and the same fitness and dignity, which distinguished the miracles of Jesus, are transferred to the works which his Spirit enabled his apostles to perform.

CHAPTER IX.

PROPAGATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

IN our Lord's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, we meet with these words: "This Gospel of the kingdom shall first be preached to all the world for a witness to all nations, and then shall the end come." These words mark the space intervening between the prediction and the termination of the Jewish state, that is, a space of less than forty years, as the period within which the Gospel was to be preached to all nations. When we attended to the fulfilment of this prophecy, we found that the account given in the book of Acts, of the multitude of early converts, of the dispersion of the Christians, and of the success of Paul's labours, is confirmed by the most unexceptionable testimony. We learn from Tacitus, that in the year of our Lord 63, thirty years after his death, there was an immense multitude of Christians in Rome. From the capital of the world, the communication was easy through all the parts of the Roman empire; and no country then discovered was too distant to hear the gospel. Accordingly it is generally agreed, that before the destruction of Jerusalem. Scythia on the north, India on the east, Gaul and Egypt on the west, and Ethiopia on the south, had received the doctrine of Christ. And Britain, which was then regarded as the extremity of the earth, being frequently visited during that period by Roman emperors or their generals, there is no improbability in what is affirmed by Christian historians, that the gospel was preached in the capital of this island thirty years after the death of our Saviour. The last fact which Scripture contains respecting the propagation of Christianity, is found in the book of Revelation. It appears from the epistles which John was commanded to write to the ministers of the churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, that there were, during the life of that apostle, seven regular Christian churches in Asia Minor. We may consider the facts hitherto mentioned as the fulfilment of that prophecy which I quoted. As to the progress of our religion, subsequent to the period marked in the prophecy, we derive no light from the books of the New Testament, because there is none of them which we certainly know to be of a later date than the destruction of Jerusalem. But there are other authentic monuments from which I shall state you the fact: and then I shall lead you to consider the force of the argument for the truth of Christianity, which has been grounded upon that fact.

The younger Pliny, proconsul of Bithynia, writes in the end of the first century to the emperor Trajan, asking directions as to his conduct

with regard to the Christians. The letter of Pliny, the 97th of the 10th book, ought to be familiar to every student in divinity. He represents that many of every age and rank were called to account for bearing the Christian name; that the contagion of that superstition had spread not only through the cities, but through the villages and fields; that the temples had been deserted, and the usual sacrifices neglected. There are extant two apologies for Christianity, written by Justin Martyr, about the middle of the second century, and one by Tertullian before the end of it. These apologies, which were public papers addressed to the emperor and the Roman magistrates, mention with triumph the multitude of Christians. And there is a work of Justin Martyr, entitled a dialogue with Trypho the Jew, published about the year 146, in which he thus speaks. "There is no nation, whether of Barbarians or Greeks, whether they live in wag-gons or tents, amongst whom prayers are not made to the Father and Creator of all, through the name of the crucified Jesus." Both Christian and heathen writers attest the general diffusion of Christianity through the empire during the third century; and in the beginning of the fourth, Constantine, the emperor of Rome, declared himself a Christian. If we consider the emperor as acting from conviction, Christianity has reason to boast of the illustrious convert. If we consider him as acting from policy, his finding it necessary to pay such a compliment to the inclinations of the Christians is the strongest testimony of their numbers. After Christianity became, by the declaration of Constantine, the established religion of the empire, it was diffused, under that character, through all the provinces. It was embraced by the barbarous nations who invaded different parts of the empire, and it received the sanction of their authority in the independent kingdoms which they founded. From them it has been handed down to the nations of modern Europe. It is at present professed throughout the most civilized and enlightened part of the world; and it has been carried in the progress of modern discoveries and conquests to remote quarters of the globe, where the arms of Rome never penetrated.

Upon these facts there has been grounded an argument for the truth of our religion. Gamaliel said in the sanhedrim, when the gospel was first preached, "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought. But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it."* The counsel has not been overthrown, therefore it is of God. The argument is specious and striking, and, with proper qualifications, it is sound. But much caution is required in stating it. And as I have given you the facts without exaggeration, so it is my duty to suggest the difficulty to which the argument is exposed, and to warn you of the danger of hurting the cause which you mean to serve, by arguing loosely from the success of the gospel.

* Acts v. 36, 39.

SECTION I.

WE are not warranted to consider the success of any system which calls itself a religion, as an infallible proof that it is divine. The prejudices, the ignorance, the vices, and follies of men, a particular conjuncture of circumstances, and the skilful application of human means, may procure a favourable reception for an imposture, and may give the belief of its divinity so firm possession of the minds of men, as to render its reputation permanent. We justly infer from the moral attributes of God that he will not invest a false prophet with extraordinary powers. But we are not warranted to infer that he will interpose in a miraculous manner to remove the delusion of those who submit their understandings to be misled by the arts of cunning men. He has given us reason, by the right use of which we may distinguish truth from falsehood. He leaves us to suffer the natural consequences of neglecting to exercise our reason; and it is presumptuous to say that there can be no fraud in a scheme, because the Almighty, for the wise purposes of his government, or in just judgment upon those who had not the love of the truth, permitted that scheme to be successful.

As the reason of the thing suggests that success is not an unequivocal proof of the divine original of any system, so the providence of God has afforded Christians a striking lesson how careful they ought to be in qualifying the argument deduced from the propagation of Christianity. For, in the seventh century of the Christian era, there arose an individual in Arabia, who, although he be regarded by every rational inquirer as an impostor, was able to introduce a religious system, which in less than a century spread through Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Persia, which has subsisted in vigour for more than eleven hundred years, and is at this day the established religion of a portion of the world much larger than Christendom. The followers of Mahomet triumph in the extended dominion of the author of their faith. But a Christian, who understands the method of defending his religion, has no reason to be shaken by the empty boast. For thus stands the argument. When we are able to point out the human causes which have produced any event, the existence of that event is no decisive proof of a divine interposition. But when all the means that were employed appear inadequate to the end, we are obliged to have recourse to the finger of God; and the inference, which arises from our being unable to give any other account of the end, will be drawn without hesitation, if there be positive evidence that, in the accomplishment of the end, there was an exertion of divine power.

When you apply this universal rule in trying the argument which appears at first sight to be equally implied in the success of the two religions, you find the history of the one so clearly discriminated from the history of the other, that the inference, which a proper examination of circumstances enables a Christian to draw from the success of the gospel, does in no degree belong to the disciples of Mahomet. The best guide whom you can follow in making this discrimination is Mr. White, who, availing himself of that acquaintance with eastern literature to which his inclination and his profession had conspired

to direct him, has published a volume of Sermons, entitled, *A Comparative View of Christianity and Mahometanism*, in their history, their evidence, and their effects. There is in these sermons much valuable and uncommon information combined with great judgment, and expressed in a nervous and elevated style. They meet many of the objections of modern times, and form one of the most complete and masterly defences of the truth of Christianity. You will learn from him, better than from any other writer, the favourable circumstances to which Mahomet owed his success. And the short picture, which I am now to give you of these circumstances, is little more than an abridgment of some of Mr. White's sermons.

Born in an ignorant uncivilized country, and amidst independent tribes of idolatrous Arabs, when the Roman empire was attacked on every side by barbarians, when the Christian world was torn with dissension about inexplicable points of controversy, when the simplicity of the gospel was corrupted, and when Christian charity was forgotten in the bitterness of mutual persecution, Mahomet, who possessed strong natural talents, saw the possibility of rising to eminence as the great reformer of religion. Having waited till his own mind was matured by meditation, and till he had established in the minds of his neighbours an opinion of his sanctity, he began at the age of forty to deliver chapters of the Koran. During the long space of twenty-three years, he had an opportunity of trying the sentiments of his countrymen. By successive communications he corrected what had proved disagreeable, and he accommodated his system so as to give the least possible offence to Jews, or Christians, or idolaters. He admitted the divine mission of Moses and of Jesus. He inculcated the unity of God, which is a fundamental article of the Jewish and Christian religions, and which was not denied by many of the surrounding idolaters. From the Old and New Testament he borrowed many sublime descriptions of the Deity, and much excellent morality; and all this he mixed with the childish traditions and fables of Arabia, with a toleration of many idolatrous rites, and with an indulgence to the vices of the climate. And thus the Koran is not a new system discovering the invention of its author, but an artful motley mixture, made up of the shreds of different opinions, without order or consistency, full of repetitions and absurdities, yet presenting to every one something agreeable to his prejudices, expressed in the captivating language of the country, and often adorned with the graces of poetry. To his illiterate countrymen such a work appeared marvellous. The artifice and elegance with which its discordant materials were combined so far surpassed their inexperience and rudeness, that they gave credit to the declaration of Mahomet, who said it was delivered to him by the angel Gabriel. The Koran became the standard of taste and composition to the Arabians; and the blind admiration of those who knew no rival to its excellence was easily transformed into a belief of its divinity.

In the beginning of his scheme, Mahomet met with much opposition, and he was obliged at one time to fly from Mecca to Medina. His reputation had prepared for him a favourable reception in that city. His address, his superior knowledge, and the influence of his connections, soon gathered round him a small party, with which he

began to make those predatory excursions, which have, in every age, been most agreeable to the character of the Arabs. Mahomet pretended, that as all gentle methods of reforming mankind had proved ineffectual, the Almighty had armed him with the power of the sword; and he went forth to compel men to receive the great prophet of heaven. His talents as a leader, the success of his first expeditions, and the hope of booty, increased the number of his followers. It was not long before he united into one body the tribes of Arabs who flocked around his standard: and at the time of his death he was meditating distant conquests. The magnificent project which he had conceived and begun was executed with ability and success by the caliphs, to whom he transmitted his temporal and his spiritual power. They led the Arabs to invade the neighbouring provinces, and by their victorious arms they founded, upon the religion of the Koran, an empire, which the joint influence of ambition and enthusiasm continued for ages to extend.

Mahomet, then, is not to be classed with the teachers of piety and virtue, whose success may be considered as an example of the power of truth over the mind. He ranks with those conquerors whom the spirit of enterprise and a concurrence of circumstances have conducted from a humble station to renown and to empire. He is distinguished from them chiefly by calling in religion to his aid; and his sagacity in employing so useful an auxiliary is made manifest by the progress and the permanence of his scheme. But the means were all human; the only assistance which Mahomet pretended to receive from heaven consisted of the revelation which dictated to him the Koran, and the strength which crowned him with victory. How far a revelation was necessary for the composition of the Koran may be left to the decision of any person of taste and judgment who remembers, when he reads it, that Mahomet was in possession of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. How far the strength of heaven was necessary to give victory to Mahomet may be left to the judgment of any one who compares the spirit of the Arabs, influenced and directed by the character and the views of their leader, with the wretched condition of those whom they conquered. Yet these were the only pretences to a divine mission which Mahomet made. He declared that he had no commission to work miracles; and he appealed to no other prophecies than those which are contained in our Scriptures.

And thus, as the introduction of his scheme did not imply the exercise of supernatural powers, as no positive unequivocal evidence of his possessing such powers was ever adduced, so his success may be fully accounted for by human means. The more that an intelligent reader is conversant with the Koran, he discerns the more clearly the internal marks of imposture; and the more that he is conversant with the manners of the times in which Mahomet lived, and with the history of the progress of his empire, he is the less surprised at the propagation and the continuance of that imposture.

When you turn from this picture to view the history of the progress of Christianity, the striking contrast will appear to you to warrant the conclusion which the followers of Jesus are accustomed to draw from the success of his religion.

In a province of the Roman empire, after it had reached the sum-

mit of its glory, and in the Augustan age, the most enlightened period of Roman history, there appeared a Teacher delivering openly, in the temple and the synagogue, the purest morality, the most spiritual institutions of worship, and the most exalted theology, not in a systematical form, but in occasional discourses, and in the simplest language. He committed his instructions, not to writing, but to a few illiterate men who had been his companions; and the number of his disciples after he was crucified by the voice of his countrymen, did not exceed one hundred and twenty. His apostles, in teaching what they received from their Master, had to encounter an opposition which, in all human rules of judging, was sufficient to create an insurmountable obstacle to the progress of their doctrine. They had to combat the vices of an age which, according to all the pictures that have been drawn of it, appears to have exceeded the usual measure of corruption. Yet they did not accommodate their precepts to the manners of the world, but denounced the wrath of God against all unrighteousness of men, against practices which were nearly universal, and the indulgence of passions which were esteemed innocent or laudable. They had to combat what is generally more obstinate than vice, the religious spirit of the times; for they commanded men "to turn from idols to serve the living God." That reverence for public institutions which even an unbeliever may feel, that attachment to received opinions, that fondness for ancient practices, and those prejudices of education which always animate narrow minds, united with the influence of the priests, and of all the artists who lived by administering to the magnificence of the temples, against the teachers of this new doctrine. The zeal of the worshippers, revived by the return of those festivals at which the Christians refused to partake, often broke forth with fury. The Christians were considered as atheists; and it was thought that the wrath of the gods could not be better appeased than by pouring every indignity and abuse upon men who presumed to despise their worship. The wise men in that enlightened age, who rose above the superstition of their countrymen, although they joined with the Christians in thinking contemptuously of the gods, were not disposed to give any countenance to the teachers of this new system. They despised the simplicity of its form, so different from the subtleties of the schools. When at any time they condescended to listen to its doctrines, they found some of them inconsistent with their received opinions, and mortifying to the pride of reason. They confounded with the popular superstitions a doctrine which professed to enlighten the great body of the people, and they condemned the prohibition of idolatry; for it was their principle, that philosophers might dispute and doubt concerning religion as they pleased, but that it was their duty, as good citizens, to conform to the established modes of worship. Upon these grounds, Christianity was so far from being favourably received by the heathen philosophers, that it was early opposed and ridiculed by them; and they continued to write against it after the empire had become Christian.

The unbelieving Jews were the bitterest enemies of the Christian faith. They beheld with peculiar indignation the progress of a doctrine, which not only invaded the prerogative of the law of Moses, by claiming to be a divine revelation, but even proposed to supersede

that law, to abolish the distinctions which it had established, and to enlighten those whom it left in darkness. National pride, and the bigotry of the Jewish spirit, were alarmed. The rulers, who had crucified the Lord Jesus, continued to employ all the power left them by the Romans in persecuting his servants; and the sufferings of the first Christians arose from the envy, the jealousy, and a fear of a state, which the prophecies of their Master had devoted to destruction.

It was not long before the Christians felt the indignation of the Roman emperors and magistrates. The Roman law guarded the established religion against the introduction of any new modes of worship which had not received the sanction of public authority: and it was a principle of Roman policy to repress private meetings, as the nurseries of sedition. “*Ab nullo genere,*” says M. Porcius Cato, in a speech preserved by Livy, “*non æque summum periculum est, si cœtus, et concilia, et secretas consultationes esse sinas.*”^{*} Upon this principle, the Christians, who separated themselves from the established worship, and held secret assemblies for the observance of their own rites, were considered as rebellious subjects; and when they multiplied in the empire, it was judged necessary to restrain them. Pliny, in the letter to which I referred, says to Trajan, “*Secundum tua mandata *ἐταγμαι* esse vetueram;*” and Trajan, in his answer, requires that every person who was accused of being a Christian should vindicate himself from the charge, by offering sacrifice to the gods. “*Conquirendi non sunt; si deferentur et arguentur puniendi sunt; ita tamen ut qui negaverit se Christianum esse, idque re ipsa manifestum fecerit, id est, supplicando deis nostris, quamvis suspectus in præteritum fuerit, veniam ex pœnitentia impetret.*”

It was not always from the profligacy or cruelty of the emperors that the sufferings of the Christians flowed. Some of the best princes who ever filled the Roman throne, men who were an ornament to human nature, and whose administration was a blessing to their subjects, felt themselves bound, by respect for the established religion, and care of the public peace, to execute the laws against this new society, the principles of whose union appeared formidable, because they were not understood. Accordingly, ecclesiastical historians have numbered ten persecutions before the conversion of Constantine; and an innumerable company of martyrs are said to have sealed their testimony with their blood, and to have exhibited amidst the most cruel sufferings a fortitude, resignation, and forgiveness, which not only demonstrated their firm conviction of the truths which they attested, but conveyed to every impartial spectator an impression that these men were assisted by a divine power, which raised them above the weakness of humanity. Voltaire, Gibbon, and other enemies of Christianity, aware of the force of that argument which arises from the multitude of the Christian martyrs, and from the spirit with which they endured the severity of their sufferings, have insinuated that there is much exaggeration in the accounts of this matter; that the generous spirit of Roman policy rendered it impossible that there should be an imperial edict enjoining a general persecution; that although the people might be incensed against the obstinacy and sul-

^{*} Liv. xxxiv. 2.

lenness of the Christians, the magistrates, in their different provinces, were their protectors; that there was no wanton barbarity in the manner of their sufferings; and that none lost their lives, but such as, by provoking a death in which they gloried, put it out of the power of the magistrates to save them.

It is natural for a friend to humanity, and an admirer of Roman manners, to wish that this apology were true; and it is not unlikely that the vanity of Christian historians, indignation against their persecutors, and the habits of rhetorical declamation, have swelled, in their descriptions, the numbers of the martyrs. It is most likely that the mob were more furious than the magistrates; that those who were entrusted with the execution of the Roman laws would observe the spirit of them in the mode of trying persons accused of Christianity; and that the governors of provinces might, upon several occasions, restrain the eagerness with which the Christians were sought after, and the brutality and iniquity with which they were treated. But, after all these allowances, any person who studies the history of the Christian church will perceive that there is much false colouring in the apology which has been made for the Roman magistrates; and we can produce incontestible evidence, the concurring testimony of Christian and heathen writers, that, upon the principles which have been explained, Christianity was publicly discouraged in all parts of the Roman empire; and that, although favourable circumstances procured some intervals of respite, there were many seasons when this religion was persecuted by order of the emperors—when the Christians were liable to imprisonment and confiscation of their estates—and when death, in some of its most terrifying forms, was inflicted upon those, who, being brought before the tribunals, refused to abjure the name of Christ.

Such was the complicated opposition which the apostles of Jesus had to encounter. Yet the measure of their success was such as I have stated. Without the aid of power, or wealth, or popular prejudices; without accommodation to reigning vices and opinions: without drawing the sword, or fomenting sedition, or encouraging the admiration of their followers to confer upon them any earthly honours—but by humble, peaceable, laborious teaching, they diffused through a great part of the Roman empire the knowledge of a new doctrine: they turned many from the idols which they had worshipped, and from the enormities which they had practised, to serve the living God; and this spiritual system advanced under every discouragement, till the conversion, or the policy, of Constantine rendered it the established religion of the Roman empire. All speculations concerning the contagion of example, the zeal that is kindled by persecution, the power of vanity, and the love of the marvellous, are visionary, when you apply them to account for the change which Christianity made during the three first centuries. That multitudes in every country, and of every age and rank, should forsake the religion in which they had been educated, and embrace one which was much stricter, and which brought no worldly advantage, but exposed them to the heaviest afflictions; that they should be thus converted by the preaching of mean men; and that their conversion should appear in the reformation of their lives as well as in the alteration of their worship, is a

phenomenon of which we require some cause, whose influence does not depend upon refined speculations, but is real and permanent : and not being able to find any such cause in the human means that were employed, we are led by the principles of our nature to acknowledge the interposition of the Almighty.

But this is the very conclusion to which we were formerly conducted. It is said in their books that God bare witness to the apostles by signs, and wonders, and divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost. And there is as clear historical evidence as the nature of the case admits of, that this assertion is true. The change, then, which we have been contemplating, is no longer unaccountable. Miracles wrought by the first teachers of Christianity were sufficient to rouse the attention of the world even in the most superstitious age, and the argument employed in them was so plain as to be level to every understanding, and so powerful, that we are not surprised at its overcoming, in the breasts of those who beheld them, all considerations of prudence and expediency. The eye-witnesses of the miracles yielding to the demonstration of the Spirit, gave glory to God by receiving his servants ; and when the signs done by the hands of the apostles were transmitted to succeeding ages, attested by an innumerable cloud of witnesses, the certain knowledge that they had been wrought produced in the minds of numbers a full conviction that the religion of Jesus was introduced into the world by the mighty power of God.

Thus, then, stands the argument arising from the propagation of Christianity. The human means appear wholly inadequate to the effect. But there is positive evidence of a divine interposition ; and if that be admitted, the effect may easily be explained. The two parts of the argument illustrate one another. The miracles, which we receive upon a strong concurring testimony, enable us to assign the cause of the propagation of Christianity ; and the knowledge of that propagation, which we derive from history, reflects additional light and credibility upon the miracles. The discrimination between the success of Mahomet and the establishment of Christianity is so clear and striking, that we may with perfect fairness apply the reasoning of Gamaliel to the latter, although we do not admit that it has any force when applied to the former.

These are the principles upon which you may safely argue from the success of the gospel that it is of divine origin. But although the argument, when thus stated, approves itself to every candid mind as sound and conclusive, there are still several difficulties respecting the propagation of Christianity.

SECTION II.

I MENTION, first, an objection, which a celebrated part of the writings of Mr. Gibbon has suggested, to the account given in the preceding Section. The fifteenth chapter in his first volume professes to be a candid, but rational inquiry into the progress and establishment of Christianity. " Our curiosity is naturally prompted to inquire by

what means the Christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth. To this inquiry, an obvious but satisfactory answer may be returned ; that it was owing to the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the ruling Providence of its great Author. But as truth and reason seldom find so favourable a reception in the world, and as the wisdom of Providence frequently condescends to use the passions of the human heart and the general circumstances of mankind as instruments to execute its purpose, we may still be permitted, though with becoming submission, to ask, not indeed what were the first, but what were the secondary causes of the rapid growth of the Christian church."

The soundest divine might have used this language. We acknowledge that the Providence of God condescends to employ various instruments to execute his purpose ; and therefore, while we affirm that the manifestation of the power of God was the great mean of overcoming those prejudices, which prevented the easy admission of truth and reason into the minds of the first hearers of the gospel, we admit that there were also means prepared by the providence of God to facilitate the progress of this religion. But it happens that Mr. Gibbon is doing the office of an enemy, while he speaks the language of a friend. His object is to show, that the joint operation of the five secondary causes, which he enumerates, is sufficient to account for the propagation of Christianity ; and the influence which the whole chapter tends to convey to the mind of the reader, although it be nowhere expressed, is this, that there is not any occasion for having recourse, in this matter, to the ruling providence of God. The five secondary causes enumerated by Mr. Gibbon are these, 1. "The inflexible and intolerant zeal of the Christians, derived, it is true, from the Jewish religion, but purified from the narrow and unsocial spirit which, instead of inviting, had deterred the Gentiles from embracing the law of Moses." 2. "The doctrine of a future life, improved by every additional circumstance which could give weight and efficacy to that important truth." 3. "The miraculous powers of the primitive church." 4. "The virtues of the primitive Christians." 5. "The union and discipline of the Christian republic, which gradually formed an independent and increasing state in the heart of the Roman empire."

Mr. Gibbon's illustration of these five causes is not a logical discussion of their influence upon the propagation of Christianity, such as might have been expected from his manly understanding. But it is filled with digressions, which, although they often detract from the influence of the causes, serve a purpose more interesting to the author than the illustration of that influence, by presenting a degrading view of the religion which these causes are said to promote. It is filled with indirect sarcastic insinuations, with partial representations of facts and arguments, and with very strained uses of quotations and authorities. I consider the fifteenth chapter of Mr. Gibbon's history as the most uncandid attack which has been made upon Christianity in modern times. The eminent abilities, the brilliant style, and the high reputation of the author, render it particularly dangerous to those whose information is not extensive : and therefore I recommend to you, not to abstain from reading it. Such a recommendation would

imply some distrust of the cause which Mr. Gibbon has attacked, and a compliance with it would be very unbecoming an inquirer after truth. But I recommend to you to read along with this chapter some of the answers that have been made to it. I know no book that has been so completely answered. The author, indeed, continues to discover the same virulence against Christianity in the subsequent volumes of his work, upon subjects of less importance than the causes of its propagation, and where the indecent controversies amongst Christians give him the appearance of a triumph in the eyes of those who confound true religion with the corruptions of it. But any person who has examined the fifteenth chapter with due care, and with a sufficient measure of information, must, I think, entertain such an opinion of the inveteracy of Mr. Gibbon's prejudices against Christianity, and of the arts which those prejudices have made him stoop to employ, as may fortify his mind against any inclination to commit himself to a guide so unsafe in every thing which concerns religion.

When you attend to the nature of the five secondary causes, you are at a loss to conceive how they come to be ranked in the place which Mr. Gibbon assigns them. If by the intolerant and inflexible zeal of the first Christians be meant their ardour and activity in promoting a religion which they believed to be divine, we readily admit that the labours of the apostles and their successors were an instrument by which God spread the knowledge of the gospel. But this cause is so far from accounting for the conviction which the first teachers themselves had of the facts which they attested, that their ardour and activity is incredible, unless it proceeded from this conviction; and the kind of inflexibility and intolerance of the idolatry and the vices of the world, which was necessarily connected with their conviction of the great facts of Christianity, was more likely to deter than to invite men to embrace it. If by the doctrine of a future life be meant the hope of life eternal, which is held forth with assurance in the gospel to the penitent, this is so essential a branch of the excellence of the doctrine, that it cannot with any propriety, be called a secondary cause; and those adventitious circumstances which Mr. Gibbon represents as connected with this hope, he means the speedy dissolution of the world, and the reign of Christ with his saints upon earth for a thousand years, commonly called the Millenium, appear to every rational inquirer to have no foundation in Scripture, and never to have formed any part of the teaching of the apostles. If by the miraculous powers of the primitive church be meant the demonstration of the Spirit, which accompanied the first preaching of the gospel in the signs and wonders done by the hands of the apostles, this is manifestly a part of the ruling providence of its great Master. It is not denied that the miracles, which rest upon unexceptionable historical evidence, were succeeded by many pretensions to miraculous powers after this gift of the Spirit was withdrawn. But it is not easy to conceive how these pretensions obtained any credit in the Christian Church, unless it was certainly known that many real miracles had been wrought; and it is obvious that the multitude of delusions which were practised tended to discredit the gospel in the eye of every rational inquirer, and, instead of promoting the success of the new religion, was most likely to confound it with

those Pagan fables which it commanded men to forsake. The virtues of the primitive Christians were exhibited in circumstances so trying that they recommended the new religion most powerfully to the world. But these virtues, which were the native expression of faith in the gospel, and the fruit of the Spirit, must be resolved into the excellence of the doctrine. Mr. Gibbon, indeed, has drawn under this head a picture of the manners of the primitive Christians, which holds them up to the ridicule and censure, not to the admiration of the world. The colouring of this picture has been discovered to be, in many places, false and extravagant : and this glaring inconsistency strikes every person who attends to it, that an author who assigns the virtues of the primitive Christians as a cause of the propagation of Christianity, chooses to degrade that religion by such a representation of these virtues, as, if it were true, would satisfy every reader that they had no influence in producing the effect which he ascribes to them.

In stating the last cause, there is an obvious inaccuracy, which Mr. Gibbon would not have been guilty of upon another subject. He is professing to account for the *rapid* growth of the Christian church. His fifth cause is the union and discipline of the Christian republic, which *gradually* formed an independent state ; and his account of the manner of its formation extends through the three first centuries of the Christian era. It matters not to the subject upon which it is introduced, whether the account be just or false ; for it is manifest that the *rapid* growth of the Christian church in the first and second centuries cannot be ascribed to the union and discipline of the Christian republic, which was not completed till after the third century.

You will perceive by the short specimen which I have given, that the danger of Mr. Gibbon's book does not arise from his having discovered five secondary causes of the propagation of Christianity, to which the world had not formerly attended. It arises from the manner in which he has illustrated them : and the only way to obviate the danger is to canvass his illustration very closely. There is very complete assistance provided for you in this exercise.

Mr. White has touched upon Mr. Gibbon's five causes shortly, but ably, in his Comparative View of Mahometanism and Christianity. Bishop Watson, in his Apology for Christianity, has given, with much animation, and without any personal abuse, a concise clear argument upon every one of the five causes, which appears to me to show in the most satisfactory manner, that they do not answer the purpose for which they are introduced, and that it is still necessary to have recourse to the ruling providence of the great Author of Christianity in order to account for its propagation. After Bishop Watson's Apology was published, an answer was made to this 15th chapter, by Sir David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes, entitled, An Inquiry into the secondary causes which Mr. Gibbon assigns for the rapid growth of Christianity. Sir David was peculiarly fitted for such an inquiry. He had an acute distinguishing mind, enriched with a very uncommon measure of theological reading, and capable of the most patient minute investigation. He was a zealous friend of Christianity. And he has applied his talents with great success in hunting out every misrepresentation and contradiction into which Mr. Gibbon was betrayed by

his favourite object. There is not so much general reasoning in the Inquiry as in the Apology. But Lord Hailes has sifted the 15th chapter thoroughly. He treats his antagonist with decency, and yet he triumphs over him in so many instances, and brings conviction home to the reader in so pointed a manner, that he is warranted to draw the conclusion which I shall give you in the moderate terms that he has chosen to employ. "Mr. Gibbon's first proposition is, that Christianity became victorious over the established religions of the earth, by its very doctrine, and by the ruling providence of its great Author; and his last, of a like import, is, that Christianity is the truth. Between his first and his last propositions there are, no doubt, many dissertations, digressions, inferences, and hints, not altogether consistent with his avowed principles. But much allowance ought to be made for that love of novelty which seduces men of genius to think and speak rashly; and for that easiness of belief, which inclines us to rely on the quotations and commentaries of confident persons, without examining the authors of whom they speak. From a review of all that he has said, it appears that the things which Mr. Gibbon considered as secondary or human causes, efficaciously promoting the Christian religion, either tended to retard its progress, or were the manifest operations of the wisdom and power of God."

SECTION III.

As Mr. Gibbon dwells upon secondary causes, it occurs in this place to mention the rank and character of those who were converted to Christianity in early times. It is obvious to observe, that although the condition and circumstances of the first teachers had been ever so mean, if by any accident their doctrine had been instantly adopted by men of superior knowledge or of commanding influence, there might have been, in this way, created a secondary cause, sufficient, in some measure, to account for the propagation of Christianity. But the fact long continued to correspond to the description given by the apostle Paul, not many wise, not many mighty, not many noble were called. But God employed the foolish to confound the wise, and those who were despised to confound those who were highly esteemed, that no flesh might glory in his presence, and that the excellency of the power might appear to be of him.* Yet even here a bound was set by the wisdom of God. Had Christianity been embraced in early times only by the ignorant vulgar, it might have been degraded in the eyes of succeeding ages; and the universal indifference or unbelief of those, whose understandings had received any degree of culture and enlargement, might have conveyed to careless observers an impression that this new religion was an irrational, mean superstition. To obviate this objection, even the Scriptures mention the names of many persons of superior rank who embraced Christianity at its first publication; and we know, that during the two first centuries, men completely versed in all the learning of the times left the schools of the

* 1 Cor. i. 26, 27, 28; 2. Cor. iv. 7.

philosophers, and employed their talents and their knowledge in explaining and defending the doctrines of Christ. Quadratus and Aristides were Athenian philosophers, who flourished in the very beginning of the second century, and who continued to wear the dress of philosophers, after they became Christians. Their apologies for Christianity are quoted by very ancient historians; but the quotations made from them are the only parts of them now extant. We still have several works of Justin Martyr, who lived in the second century. In his Dialogue with Tripho the Jew, he gives an account of the time and attention which he had bestowed upon the study of Platonism, and the admiration in which he once held that doctrine. But now, he says, having been acquainted with the prophets and those men who were the friends of Jesus, I have found that this is the only safe and useful philosophy. And thus I have become a philosopher indeed. *Ταυτην μοιρον ἐνέεισκον φιλοσοφίαν ασφαλὴν τε καὶ συμφερόν.*

There was one early convert to Christianity, whose attainments and whose character may well be considered as constituting a most powerful secondary cause in its propagation. I mean the apostle Paul, a learned Pharisee, bred at the feet of Gamaliel, a man of an ardent elevated mind, and of a strong well-cultivated understanding, who laboured more abundantly than all the apostles, with indefatigable zeal, and with peculiar advantages. But it is remarkable that this man, in preaching the Gospel, did not avail himself of all the arts which he had learned to employ. His knowledge of the law was used not to support but to overturn the system in which he had been bred. There is not in his writings the most distant approach to the forms of Grecian or Asiatic eloquence; and there is a freedom and a severity in his reproofs, very different from the courtly manner which his education might have formed. His conversion is, in itself, an illustrious argument of the truth of Christianity. You will find the force of this argument well stated in a treatise of the first Lord Lyttelton, entitled, *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul*: one of those classical essays which every student of divinity should read. The elegant and amiable writer, whose name is dear to every man of taste and virtue, demonstrates the following points with a beautiful persuasive simplicity. 1. The supposition, neither of enthusiasm nor of imposture, is sufficient to account for the conversion of this apostle; 2. The character of his mind, and the history of his life, conspire in confirming the narration so often repeated in the book of Acts; 3. That narration involves in it the truth of the resurrection of Jesus, the great fact which the apostles witnessed; 4. Paul had had no opportunity of holding any previous concert with the other apostles, but was completely separated from them; 5. His situation gave him the most perfect access to know whether there was truth in the report published by them, as witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus; and therefore his concurrence with the other apostles, in publishing that report, and preaching the doctrine founded upon it, is an accession of new evidence after the first promulgation of Christianity. The force of this new evidence will always remain with those who acknowledge the books of the New Testament to be authentic. And, for the benefit of the Christians who lived before the books were published, it was wisely contrived that the new

evidence should arise out of the history of that man whose labours contributed most largely to the conversion of the world, so that in the very person from whom they received their faith, they had a demonstration of its being divine.

And thus you observe, that while the humble station of the rest of the apostles necessarily leads us to a divine interposition, as the only mean of qualifying such men for being the instructors of the world, the condition and education of the apostle Paul, which furnished a secondary cause that was useful in the propagation of Christianity, do, at the same time, render his conversion such an argument for the truth of that religion, as is much more than sufficient to counterbalance all the advantages which it could possibly derive from his knowledge and his talents. All this you will find illustrated in a very full life of St. Paul, which Dr. Macknight has prefixed to his commentary on the epistles.

SECTION IV.

I HAVE stated the qualifications which are necessary in order to render the argument arising from the propagation of Christianity sound and conclusive; I have suggested the manner of obviating the objections contained in Mr. Gibbon's account of the secondary causes which promoted the rapid growth of the Christian church; and I have marked the argument implied in the conversion of the apostle Paul.

All that I have hitherto said respects the means employed in propagating the gospel. But there is another set of objections that will often meet you respecting the measure of the effect which these means have produced. "If the gospel was really introduced by the mighty power of God, why was it not published much earlier? It is as easy for the Almighty to exert his power at one time as at another, yet the world was four thousand years old before the gospel appeared. Why is this beneficent religion diffused through so small a portion of the globe? It has been said that if our earth be divided into thirty equal parts, Paganism is established in nineteen of those parts, Mahometanism in six, and Christianity only in five. Why have the evil passions of men been permitted to mingle themselves with the work of God? Why has the sword of the persecutor been called in to aid the counsel of heaven? Why does the gospel now spread so slowly, that the triumphs of this religion seem to have ceased not many centuries after they began? Why has a system, in support of which the Ruler of the universe condescended to make bare his holy arm, degenerated, throughout a great part of the Christian world, into a corrupt form, very far removed from its original simplicity? And why is its influence over the hearts and lives of men so inconsiderable, even in those countries where the truth is taught as it is in Christ Jesus? This partiality, and delay, and imperfection in the propagation of the gospel resembles very much the work of man, whose limited operations correspond to the scantiness of his power. But all this is very unlike the word of the Almighty, which runneth swiftly throughout the

whole earth, to execute all the extent of the gracious purpose formed by the Universal Father of mankind.”

I have stated these objections in one view with all their force. You will find them not only urged seriously in the works of deistical writers, but thrown out lightly and scoffingly in conversation, so that it behoves you very much to be well apprized of the manner of answering them. It is impossible for me to enter into any detail upon this subject; but I shall suggest to you, in the six following propositions, the heads of answers to all objections of this kind, leaving them to be enlarged and applied by your own reading.

1. Observe, that these questions, were they much more pointed and unanswerable than they are, could not have the effect to overturn historical evidence. If there be positive satisfying testimony that the divine power was exerted in support of Christianity at its first promulgation, our being unable to account for the particular measure of the effect which that exertion has produced does not, by any clear connection of premises with a conclusion, invalidate the testimony, but only discovers our ignorance of the ways of God; and this is an ignorance which we feel upon every other subject, which, in judging of the works of nature, we never admit as an argument against matter of fact, and which any person, who has just impressions of the limited powers of man, and the immense extent of the divine counsels, will not consider as of weight when applied to the evidences of religion.

2. Observe that all the questions imply an expectation that God will bestow the same religious advantages upon the children of men in every age and country. But, as no person who understands the terms which he uses, will say that God is bound in justice to distribute his favours equally to all his creatures, so no person who attends to the course of Divine Providence will be led to draw any such expectation as the questions imply, from the conduct of the Almighty in other matters. Recollect the diversities of the human species, the differences amongst individuals, in vigour of constitution, in bodily accomplishments, in the powers of understanding, in temper and passions, in the opportunities of improvement, and the measure of comfort and enjoyment, or of toil and sorrow, which their situations afford. Recollect the differences amongst nations in climate, in government, in the amount of natural and political advantages, and in the whole sum of national prosperity. It is impossible for us to conceive how the subordination of society could be maintained, if all men had the same talents; or how the course of human affairs could proceed, if every part of the globe was like every other. Being thus accustomed to behold and to admire the varieties in the natural advantages of men, we are prepared, by the analogy of the works of God, to expect like varieties in their religious advantages; and although we may not be able to trace all the reasons why the light of the gospel was so long of appearing, or is at present so unequally distributed, yet if we bear in mind that this is but the beginning of our existence, and that every man shall, in the end, be dealt with according to that which had been given him, we shall not for a moment annex the idea of injustice to this part of the Divine conduct.

3. Observe that these questions imply an expectation, that, while

human works admit of preparation, the work of God will, in every case, be done instantly. But it is manifest that this expectation also is contradicted by the whole course of nature. For although God may, by a word of his mouth, do all his pleasure, yet he generally chooses, for wise reasons, some of which we are often able to trace, to employ means, and to allow such a gradual operation of those means, as admits of a progress, in which one thing paves the way for another, and gives notice of its approach. In all that process by which food for man and beast is brought out of the ground—in the opening of the human mind from infancy to manhood—and in those natural changes which affect the bowels or the surface of the earth, we profit very much by marking the slow advances of nature to its end ; and therefore we need not be surprised to find the steps of Divine Providence in the publication of the gospel very different from the haste, which, in our imagination, appears desirable. As there is a time of maturity in natural productions to which all the preparation has tended, so the gospel appeared at that season which is styled in Scripture the fulness of time, and which is found, upon a close attention to circumstances, to have been the fittest for such a revelation. There is an excellent sermon upon this subject by Principal Robertson, which you will find in the “Scots Preacher,” distinguished by that soundness of thought, and that compass of historical information, which his other writings may lead you to expect. The same subject will often meet you in the books that you read upon the deistical controversy ; and when you attend to the complete illustration which it has received from the writings of many learned men, you will be satisfied that, as the need of an extraordinary revelation was at that time become manifest, so the improvements of science, and the political state of the world, conspired to render the age in which the gospel appeared better qualified than any preceding age for examining the evidences of a revelation, for affording many striking confirmations of its divine original, and for conveying it with ease and advantage to future ages. The preparation which produced this fulness of time had been carrying forward during four thousand years ; and nearly two thousand have elapsed, while Christianity has been spreading through a fifth part of the globe. But this slowness, so agreeable to the general course of nature, will not appear to you inconsistent with the wisdom or goodness of the Almighty, when you,

4. Observe that in all this there was a preparation for the universal diffusion of the gospel. A considerable measure of religious knowledge was diffused through the world before the appearance of the gospel : and the delay of its universal publication has perhaps already contributed, and may be so disposed in future as to contribute still more, to prepare the world for receiving it. The few simple doctrines of that traditional religion which existed before the deluge, were transmitted, by the longevity of the patriarchs, through very few hands for the first fourteen hundred years of the world. Methuselah lived many years with Adam ; Shem lived many years with Methuselah ; and Abraham lived with Shem till he was seventy-five. Between Adam and Abraham there were only two intermediate links ; yet a chain of tradition, extending through nearly seventeen hundred years, and embracing the creation, the fall, and the promise of a Sa-

viour, was preserved. The calling of Abraham, although it conferred peculiar advantages upon his family, was fitted, by his character and situation, to enlighten his neighbours; and the whole history of the Jewish people—their sojourning in Egypt, the place which they were destined to inhabit, their conquests, and the captivities by which they were afterwards scattered over the face of the earth, rendered them, in an eminent degree, the lights of the world. Bryant, in his “*Mythology*,” and men who have applied to such investigations, have traced, with much probability, a resemblance to the Mosaic system in the religions of many of the neighbouring nations; and if we pay any attention to the force of the instances in which this resemblance has been illustrated, even although we should not give credit to all the conjectures that have been advanced, we can hardly entertain a doubt that the revelation with which the Jews were favoured was a source of instruction to other people. During the existence of this peculiar religion wise men were raised, by the providence of God, in many countries, who did not, indeed, pretend to be the messengers of heaven, but whose discoveries exposed the growing corruptions of the established systems, or whose laws imposed some restraint upon the excesses of superstition; while the progress of society, and the advancement of reason, opened the minds of men to a more perfect instruction than they had formerly been qualified to receive.

These hints suggest this enlarged view of the economy of Divine Providence, that God in no age left himself without a witness, and that the several dispensations of religion, in ancient times, both to Jews and heathens, were adapted to the circumstances of the human race, so as to lead them forward by a gradual education from times of infancy and childhood to the rational sublime system unfolded in the gospel.

It is following out the same view, to consider the partial propagation of the gospel as intended to prepare the world for receiving it. Many of the heathen moralists, who lived after the days of our Saviour, discover more refined notions of God, and more enlarged conceptions of the duties of man, than any of their predecessors. They profited by the gospel, although they did not acknowledge the obligation; and they disseminated some part of its instruction, although they disdained to appear as its ministers. The Koran inculcates the unity of God, and retains a part of the Christian morality; and thus the successful accommodating religion of Mahomet may be considered as a step, by which the providence of God is to lead the nations that have embraced it from the absurdities of Paganism to the true faith. When Christianity became the established religion of the Roman empire, the other parts of the world were very far behind in civilization, and many of the countries that have been lately discovered, are in the rudest state of society. But the conversion of savage tribes to a spiritual rational system is impracticable. Much time is necessary to open their understandings, to give them habits of industry and order, and to render them, in some measure, acquainted with ideas and manners more polished than their own. A long intercourse with the nations of Europe, who appear fitted by their character to be the instructors of the rest of the world, may be the mean appointed by God for removing the prejudices of idolatry and ignorance; and as the

enlightened discoveries of modern times make us acquainted with the manners, the views, and the interests, as well as with the geographical situation of all the inhabitants of the globe, we may, not indeed with the precipitancy of visionary reformers, but in that gradual progress which the nature of the case requires, be the instrument of preparing them for embracing our religion : and by the measure in which they adopt our improvements in art and science, they may become qualified to receive, through our communication, the knowledge of the true God, and of his Son Christ Jesus.

5. Observe, that the objection, implied in some of the questions that I stated, necessarily arises from the employment of human means in that partial propagation of the Gospel which has already taken place. Any such objection might have been effectually obviated by a continued miracle ; but it remains to be inquired whether the nature of the case, or the general analogy of Divine Providence, gives any reason to expect this method of obviating the objection. Had the outstretched arm of the Almighty, which first introduced the Gospel, continued to be exerted through all succeeding ages in the propagation of it, the course of human affairs would have been unhinged, and the argument from miracles would have been weakened, because the extraordinary interposition of the Almighty would, by reason of its frequent returns, have been confounded with the ordinary course of nature. The divine original of the gift, therefore, being ascertained, the hand of him from whom it had proceeded was wisely withdrawn, and human passions and interests were combined, by his all-ruling Providence, to diffuse it in the measures which he had ordained. The pious zeal of many Christians in early and later times, the vanity, ambition, or avarice, which led others to promote their private ends by spreading the faith of Christ, the wide extent of the Roman empire at the time when Christianity became the established religion of the state, the subsequent dismemberment of the empire by the invasions and settlements of the barbarous nations, and the spirit of commerce which has carried the descendants of these nations to regions never visited by the Roman arms, are some of the instruments employed by the providence of God in the propagation of Christianity. It was not to be expected, that in a propagation thus committed to human means, the heavenly gift would escape all contamination from the imperfect and impure channels through which it was conveyed ; and it cannot be denied that there have been many corruptions, many improper methods of converting men to Christianity, and many gross adulterations and perversions of “ the faith once delivered to the saints.” But you will observe in general, that although the gifts of God are liable to abuse through the imperfections and vices of men, such abuse is never considered as any argument that the gifts did not proceed from him : and with regard to the corruptions of Christianity in particular, you will observe, that so far from their creating any presumption against the evidence of our religion, there are circumstances which render them an argument for its divine original. They are foretold in the Scriptures. They arose by the neglect of the Scriptures, and they were in a great measure remedied at the Reformation, by the return of a considerable part of the Christian world to that truth which the Scriptures declare. The case stands thus. The Gospel contains a system

of faith and practice, which is safely deposited in those authentic records that are received by the whole Christian world. That system was indeed deformed in its progress by the errors and passions of men, but it breaks through this cloud by its own intrinsic light. The striking manner in which the prophecy of the corruptions of Christianity has been fulfilled forms an important branch of the evidence of our religion. The discussions which they occasion have contributed very much to render the nature of the Gospel more perfectly understood; and the further that the Christian world departs either from those corruptions to which the Reformation applied a remedy, or from any others which the Scriptures condemn, the divinity of their religion will become the more manifest. Hence you may perceive an advantage arising from the slowness with which the Gospel was propagated for many centuries. In its rapid progress before the destruction of Jerusalem, the pure doctrine of the apostles was carried by themselves, or their immediate successors, through all the parts of the then known world. But had it spread with equal rapidity in the dark ages, all the absurdities which at that time adhered to it would have spread also; and so universal a disease could hardly have admitted of any remedy. It is now purified from a great part of the dross. The influence of the Reformation has extended even to Roman Catholic countries; and in those which are reformed, the progress of knowledge, and the application of sound criticism, are continuing to illustrate the genuine doctrines of Christ. The Gospel will thus be communicated with less adulteration to those parts of the world which are yet to receive the first notice of it: and that free intercourse, which the spirit of modern commerce is now opening between countries which formerly regarded each other with jealousy, may be the means of extirpating the errors of Popery which were sown in remote regions by the zeal of Roman Catholic missionaries. These are pleasing views, sufficient to overpower the peevish objection suggested by the corruptions of Christianity; they lead us to consider the Almighty as making all things work together for the establishment of truth and righteousness upon earth; and they teach us to rest with assurance in the declaration of Scripture, that "all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord."

6. One part of the objection only remains. It cannot be denied that there is much wickedness in Christian countries, even those which hold the truth in its primitive simplicity. It is not unnatural for a benevolent mind, which wishes the virtue of mankind as the only sure foundation of their happiness, to regret that the Gospel does not produce a more complete reformation of the vices of the world; and if the most important blessing which a revelation can confer is to turn men from their iniquities, a doubt may sometimes obtrude itself even upon a candid and devout mind, how far the effect really produced is proportioned to the long preparation, and the mighty works which ushered in the Gospel. The following observations serve to remove this doubt. It is extremely difficult to attain to any precise notion of the sum of wickedness in ancient times; and there are no data upon which we can form any estimate of what would have been the measure of wickedness in the present circumstances of society, if the Gospel had not appeared. The religion of Jesus has extirpated some

horrid practices of ancient times: it has refined the manners of men in war, and in several important articles of domestic intercourse; and it has produced an extension and activity of beneficence unknown in the heathen world. It imposes restraints upon those evil passions and inordinate desires, which, were it not for its influence, would be indulged by many without control; and it cherishes in the breasts of individuals those private virtues of humility, patience, and resignation, which do not receive all the honour which is due to them, because their excellence withdraws them from public observation. It addresses itself to every principle of action in the human breast with greater energy than any other system ever did: the tendency of all its parts is to render men virtuous; and if it fails in reforming the world, we cannot conceive any method of reformation consistent with the character of free agents, that is likely to prove effectual. It is according to this character that God always deals with the children of men. Religion joins its influence to reason. But it is an inconsistency in terms to say that religion should compel men to be virtuous, because compulsion destroys the essence of virtue.

These observations appear to me to be a sufficient answer to the objection against the truth of Christianity, which has been drawn from its appearing to have little influence upon the lives of Christians. But I am sensible that they are not sufficient to counteract the influence of this objection upon the minds of men. The wickedness of those who call themselves Christians is undoubtedly a reproach to our religion. It is a grief to the friends of Christianity, and the most ready sarcasm in the mouths of its enemies. It is your business, the office for which all your studies are meant to prepare you, to diminish the influence of this objection. If you convert a sinner from the error of his ways, or brighten, by your example and your discourse, the graces of the disciples of Christ, you confirm the argument arising from the propagation of our religion. And the best service that you can render to that honourable cause, in support of which you profess to exert your talents, is to exhibit in your own character the genuine spirit of Christianity, and to illustrate the principles of that doctrine which is according to godliness, in such a manner as may render them, through the blessing of God, the means of improving the character of your neighbours.

The amount of the answers which I have suggested may be summed up in a few words. Any objection, arising from the measure of effect produced by the gospel, cannot overturn direct historical evidence of a divine interposition. We are not warranted, by the course of nature, and the conduct of Divine Providence in other matters, to expect either that the Almighty will confer the same religious advantages upon all his creatures, or that he will accomplish, in a short space of time, that publication of the gospel which formed part of his original purpose. A considerable measure of religious knowledge was diffused through the world during the preparation for the appearance of the gospel, and the delay of its universal publication may contribute to prepare the world for receiving it. The corruptions of Christianity, which arose unavoidably from the human means employed in its propagation, could not have been obviated without a continued miracle; and the imperfect degree in which the gospel has

actually reformed the world, however much it may be a matter of regret to Christians, yet, when compared with the excellence and energy of the doctrine, is only a proof that religion was given to improve, but not to destroy, the character of reasonable agents.

Besides the books mentioned in the course of this chapter, you may read two excellent sermons of Bishop Atterbury, on the Miraculous Propagation of the Gospel.

You will derive the most enlarged views upon this, as upon every other subject connected with Christianity, from Butler's Analogy, particularly from Part ii. chap. vi. at the beginning.

Consult also Jortin.

Law's Considerations on the Theory of Religion.

Paley's Evidences, vol. ii.

Hill's Sermons.

Shaw and Dick upon the Counsel of Gamaliel.

Macknight's Truth of the Gospel History; a book that deserves to be better known, and more generally read than it is. All the authorities and arguments, which are concisely stated by other writers, are spread out in that large work with a fulness and clearness of illustration that is very useful, and, in many places, with a degree of acuteness and ingenuity that is not commonly met with. He has dealt very largely upon the argument for the truth of the Christian religion, which arises from the conversion of the world to Christianity. You will find, in this part of his work, a most complete elucidation of the whole argument—the history of the ten persecutions before Constantine—and a great deal of information with which it is highly proper your minds should be furnished, and which you will not easily gather from any other single treatise.

BOOK II.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE SCRIPTURE SYSTEM.

CHAPTER I.

INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE.

I HAVE stated the evidence upon which we receive the books of the New Testament as authentic genuine records; and I have long been employed in examining this high claim which they advance, that they contain a divine revelation. It appeared that this claim was not contradicted by the general contents of the books, but rather that there was a presumption arising from thence in its favour. We found the claim directly supported by miracles received upon clear historical evidence, by the agreement of the new dispensation with a train of prophecies contained in books that are certainly known to have existed many ages before our Saviour was born, by the striking fulfilment of his prophecies, by his resurrection from the dead, by the miraculous powers conferred upon his apostles after his ascension, and by the propagation of his religion.

But, even after this review of the principal evidences of the truth of Christianity, there remains a very interesting question, before we are prepared to enter upon a particular examination of the system of truth revealed in the books of the New Testament. The question is, whether we are to regard these books as inspired writings? It is possible, you will observe, that Christ was a divine messenger, that the persons whom he chose as his companions during his abode upon earth were endowed by him with the power of working miracles; and yet that, in recording the history of his life, and publishing the doctrines of his religion, they were left merely to the exercise of their own recollection and understanding. Upon this supposition, the miracles of our Lord and his apostles may be received as facts established by satisfying historical evidence; and an inference may be drawn from them, that the person who performed such works, and who committed to his disciples powers similar to his own, was a teacher sent from God; and yet the writings of the apostles will be considered as human compositions, distinguished from the works of other men

merely by the superior advantages which the authors had derived from the conversation of such a person as Jesus, but in no respect dictated by the Spirit of God.

This is the system of the modern Socinians, which their eagerness to get rid of some of the doctrines, that other Christians consider as clearly revealed in Scripture, has led them of late openly to avow. I quote the sentiments of Dr. Priestley from one of his latest publications, the very same in which he bears a strong testimony to the credibility of the resurrection of Jesus. "I think that the Scriptures were written without any particular inspiration, by men who wrote according to the best of their knowledge, and who, from their circumstances, could not be mistaken with respect to the greater facts of which they were proper witnesses, but (like other men subject to prejudice) might be liable to adopt a hasty and ill-grounded opinion concerning things which did not fall within the compass of their own knowledge, and which had no connection with any thing that was so." "Setting aside all idea of the inspiration of the writers, I consider Matthew and Luke as simply historians, whose credit must be determined by the circumstances in which they wrote, and the nature of the facts which they relate." And again, when he is speaking of a particular doctrine, in proof of which some passages in the Epistles are generally adduced, Dr. Priestley says, "It is not from a few casual expressions in epistolary writings, which are seldom composed with so much care as books intended for the use of posterity, that we can be authorised to infer that such was the serious opinion of the apostles. But if it had been their real opinion, it would not follow that it was true, unless the teaching of it should appear to be included in their general commission."*

And thus, according to Dr. Priestley, there is no kind of inspiration either in the gospels or the epistles. He admits them to be writings of the apostles. But he maintains that the measure of regard due to any narration or assertion contained in these writings is left to be determined by the rules of criticism, by human reason judging how far that assertion or narration was included in the commission of the apostles, *i. e.* how far it is essential to the Christian religion. Different persons entertain different apprehensions concerning that which is essential to revelation. And, according to Dr. Priestley's system, every person being at liberty to deny any part of Scripture that appears to him unessential, there is no invariable standard of our religion; but the gospel is to every one just what he pleases to make it. Accordingly Dr. Priestley, who sometimes argues very ably for the divine mission of Jesus, by availing himself of that liberty which he derives from denying the inspiration of Scripture, has successively struck out of his creed many of those articles which appear to us fundamental. And you may judge of the length to which his principles lead, when one of his followers, in a publication avowedly under his protection, has written an essay to show that our Lord was not free from sin. Many years before Dr. Priestley's writings appeared, the received notions of the inspiration of the apostles, which had been held by Christians without much examination, were acutely

* History of Early Opinions, vol. iv. p. 5, 58—vol. i. p. 70.

canvassed. Dr. Conyers Middleton, author of the *Life of Cicero*, has done eminent service to the Protestant cause, by exposing the imposture of the Popish miracles, and by tracing, in his *Letter from Rome*, the heathen original of many ceremonies of the church of Rome. But his attachment to Christianity itself is very suspicious, and he is far from being a safe guide in any questions respecting the truth of our holy faith. In some of his miscellaneous tracts, he infers from the dispute between Peter and Paul at Antioch,* from the variations in the four evangelists, and from other circumstances, that the inspiration of the apostles was only an occasional illapse, communicated to their minds at particular seasons, as the power of working miracles was given them only at those times when they had occasion to exert it; that they were not under the continual direction of an unerring spirit; and that, on ordinary occasions, they were in the condition of ordinary men. Nearly the same opinion was held by the late Gilbert Wakefield, who was a disciple of Priestley, but who does not appear to advance so far as his master. He contends, that a plenary infallible inspiration, attending and controlling the evangelists in every conjuncture, is a doctrine not warranted by Scripture, unnecessary, and injurious to Christianity; although he admits that the illuminating Spirit of God had purified their minds, and enlarged their ideas. The system of Bishop Benson, in his essay concerning inspiration, prefixed to his paraphrase of St. Paul's epistles, is, that the whole scheme of the gospel was communicated from heaven to the minds of the apostles, was faithfully retained in their memories, and is expounded in their writings by the use of their natural faculties. The loose notions concerning inspiration, entertained by the vulgar and by those who never thought deeply of the subject, go a great deal farther. . But it is proper that you should know distinctly what is the measure and kind of inspiration which we are warranted to hold.

In order to establish your minds in the belief that the Scriptures are given by inspiration of God, it is necessary to begin with observing, that inspiration is not impossible. The Father of Spirits may act upon the minds of his creatures, and this action may extend to any degree which the purposes of divine wisdom require. He may superintend the minds of those who write, so as to prevent the possibility of error in their writings. This is the lowest degree of inspiration. He may enlarge their understandings, and elevate their conceptions beyond the measure of ordinary men. This is a second degree. Or he may suggest to them the thoughts which they shall express, and the words which they shall employ, so as to render them merely the vehicles of conveying his will to others. This is the highest degree of inspiration. No sound theist will deny that all three degrees are possible; and it remains to be inquired, what reason we have for thinking that the Almighty did act in any such manner upon the minds of the writers of the New Testament. If they were really inspired, the evidence of the fact will probably ascertain the measure of inspiration which was vouchsafed to them. The evidence consists of the following parts: The inspiration of the apostles was

* Gal. ii.

necessary for the purposes of their mission—It was promised by our Lord—It is claimed by themselves—The claim was admitted by their disciples—And it is not contradicted by any circumstance in their writings.

I. Inspiration of the apostles appears to have been necessary for the purposes of their mission ; and, therefore, if we admit that Jesus came from God, and that he sent them forth to make disciples of all nations, we shall acknowledge that some degree of inspiration is highly probable.

The first light in which the books of the New Testament lead us to consider the apostles is, as the historians of Jesus. After having been his companions during his ministry, they came forth to bear witness of him ; and as the benefit of his religion was not to be confined to the age in which he or they lived, they left in the four Gospels a record of what he did and taught. Two of the four were written by the apostles Matthew and John. Mark and Luke, whose names are prefixed to the other two, were probably of the seventy whom our Lord sent out in his lifetime ; and we learn from the most ancient Christian historians, that the gospel of Mark was revised by Peter, and the gospel of Luke by Paul ; and that both were afterwards approved by John, so that all the four may be considered as transmitted to the church with the sanction of apostolical authority. Now, if you recollect the condition of the apostles, and the nature of their history, you will perceive that, even as historians, they stood in need of some measure of inspiration. Plato might feel himself at liberty to feign many things of his master Socrates, because it mattered little to the world whether the instruction that was conveyed to them proceeded from the one philosopher or from the other. But the servants of a divine teacher, who appeared as his witnesses, and professed to be the historians of his life, were bound by their office to give a true record. And their history was an imposition upon the world, if they did not declare exactly and literally what they had seen and heard. This was an office which required not only a love of the truth, but a memory more retentive and more accurate than it was possible for persons of the character and education of the apostles to possess. To relate, at the distance of twenty years, long moral discourses, which were not originally written, and which were not attended with any striking circumstances that might imprint them upon the mind ; to preserve a variety of parables, the beauty and significancy of which depended upon particular expressions ; to record long and minute prophecies, where the alteration of a single phrase might have produced an inconsistency between the event and the prediction ; and to give a particular detail of the intercourse which Jesus had with his friends and with his enemies ; all this is a work so very much above the capacity of unlearned men, that, had they attempted to execute it by their own natural powers, they must have fallen into such absurdities and contradictions as would have betrayed them to every discerning eye. It was therefore highly expedient, and even necessary for the faith of future ages, that besides those opportunities of information which the apostles enjoyed, and that tried integrity which they possessed, their understanding and their memory should be assisted by a supernatural influence, which

might prevent them from mistaking the meaning of what they had heard, which might restrain them from putting into the mouth of Jesus any words which he did not utter, or from omitting what was important, and which might thus give us perfect security, that the Gospels are as faithful a copy, as if Jesus himself had left in writing those sayings and those actions which he wished posterity to remember.

But we consider the apostles in the lowest view, when we speak of them as barely the historians of their Master. In their epistles they assume a higher character, which renders inspiration still more necessary. All the benefit, which they derived from the public and the private instructions of Jesus before his death, had not so far opened their minds as to qualify them for receiving the whole counsel of God. And he, who knows what is in man, declares to them the night on which he was betrayed, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now."* The purpose of many of his parables, the full meaning even of some of his plain discourses, had not been attained by them. They had marvelled when he spake to them of earthly things. But many heavenly things of his kingdom had not been told them: and they, who were destined to carry his religion to the ends of the earth, themselves needed, at the time of their receiving this commission, that some one should instruct them in the doctrine of Christ. It is true that, after his resurrection, Jesus opened their understandings, and explained to them the Scriptures, and he continued upon earth forty days, speaking to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. It appears, however, from the history which they have recorded in the book of Acts, that some further teaching was necessary for them.† Immediately before our Lord ascended, their minds being still full of the expectation of a temporal kingdom, they say unto him, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? It was not till some time after they received the gift of the Holy Ghost, that they understood that the gospel had taken away the obligation to observe the ceremonies of the Mosaic law: and the action of Peter in baptizing Cornelius, a devout heathen, gave offence to some of the apostles and brethren in Judea when they first heard it.‡ Yet in their epistles, we find just notions of the spiritual nature of the religion of Jesus as a kingdom of righteousness, the faithful subjects of which are to receive remission of sins, and sanctification through his blood, and just notions of the extent of this religion as a dispensation, the spiritual blessings of which are to be communicated to all in every land who receive it in faith and love. These notions appear to us to be the explication both of the ancient predictions, and of many particular expressions that occur in the discourses of our Lord. But it is manifest that they had not been acquired by the apostles during the teaching of Jesus. They are so adverse to every thing which men educated in Jewish prejudices had learned, and had hoped, that they could not be the fruit of their own reflections; and, therefore, they imply the teaching of that Spirit who gradually impressed them upon the mind, guiding the apostles gently, as they were able to follow him, into all the truth

* John xv. 12.

† Acts ch. i.

‡ Acts ch. xi.

connected with the salvation of mankind. As inspiration was necessary to give the minds of the apostles possession of the system that is unfolded in their epistles, so many parts of that system are removed at such a distance from human discoveries, and are liable to such misapprehension, that unless we suppose a continued superintendence of the Spirit by whom it was taught, succeeding ages would not have a sufficient security that those, who were employed to deliver it, had not been guilty of gross mistakes in some most important doctrines.

Inspiration will appear still further necessary, when you recollect that the writings of the apostles contain several predictions of things to come. Paul foretells, in his epistles, the corruptions of the church of Rome, and many other circumstances which have taken place in the history of the Christian church: and the Revelation is a book of prophecy, of which part has been already fulfilled, while the rest, we trust, will be explained by the events which are to arise in the course of Providence. But prophecy is a kind of writing which implies the highest degree of inspiration. When predictions, like those in Scripture, are particular and complicated, and the events are so remote and so contingent as to be out of the reach of human sagacity, it is plain that the writers of the predictions do not speak according to the measure of information which they had acquired by natural means, but are merely the instruments through which the Almighty communicates, in such measure and such language as he thinks fit, that knowledge of futurity which is denied to man. And although the full meaning of their own predictions was not understood by themselves, they will be acknowledged to be true prophets, when the fulfilment comes to reflect light upon that language, which, for wise purposes, was made dark at the time of its being put into their mouth.

Thus the nature of the writings of the apostles suggests the necessity of their having been inspired. They could not be accurate historians of the life of Jesus without one degree of inspiration; nor safe expounders of his doctrine without a higher; nor prophets of distant events without the highest. As all the three degrees are equally possible to God, it is natural to presume, from the end for which the apostles were sent, that the degree which was suited to every part of their writings was not withheld; and we find the promise of Jesus perfectly agreeable to this presumption.

II. Inspiration of the apostles was promised by our Lord. It is not unfair reasoning to adduce promises contained in the Scriptures themselves, as proofs of their divine inspiration. It were, indeed, reasoning in a circle, to bring the testimony of the Scriptures in proof of the divine mission of Jesus. But that being established by the evidence which has been stated, and the books of the New Testament having been proved to be the authentic genuine records of the persons whose names they bear, we are warranted to argue from the declarations contained in them, what is the measure of inspiration which Jesus was pleased to bestow upon his servants. He might have been a divine teacher, and they might have been his apostles, although he had bestowed none at all. But his character gives us security that they possessed all that he promised. We read in the gospels that Jesus "ordained twelve that they should be with him.

and that he might send them forth to preach.”* And as this was the purpose for which they were first called, so it was the charge left them at his departure—“Go,” said he, “preach the gospel to every creature; make disciples of all nations.”† His constant familiar intercourse with them was intended to qualify them for the execution of this charge; and the promises made to them have a special reference to the office in which they were to be employed. When he sent them during his life to preach in the cities of Israel, he said, “But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.”‡ And when he spake to them in his prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, of the persecutions which they were to endure after his death, he repeats the same promise: “For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist.”§ It is admitted that the words in both these passages refer properly to that assistance, which the inexperience of the apostles was to derive from the suggestions of the Spirit, when they should be called to defend their conduct and their cause before the tribunals of the magistrates. But the fulfilment of this promise was a pledge, both to the apostles and to the world, that the measure of inspiration necessary for the more important purpose implied in their commission would not be withheld; and accordingly, when that purpose came to be unfolded to the apostles, the promise of the assistance of the Spirit was expressed in a manner which applies it to the extent of their commission. In the long affectionate discourse recorded by John, when our Lord took a solemn farewell of the disciples, after eating the last passover with them, he said, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him. But ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak himself, but whatsoever he shall hear that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come.”|| Here are all the degrees of inspiration which we found to be necessary for the apostles: the Spirit was to bring to their remembrance what they had heard—to guide them into the truth, which they were not then able to bear—and to show them things to come; and all this they were to derive, not from occasional illapses, but from the perpetual inhabitation of the Spirit. That this inspiration was vouchsafed to them, not for their own sakes, but in order to qualify them for the successful discharge of their office as the messengers of Christ, and the instructors of mankind, appears from several expressions of

* Mark iii. 14. † Mark xvi. 16; Matt. xxviii. 19. See original.

‡ Matt. x. 19, 20. See original.

§ Luke xxi. 15.

|| John xiv. 16, 17, 26; xvi. 12, 13. See original.

that prayer which immediately follows the discourse containing the promise of inspiration; particularly from these words, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."* In conformity to this prayer, so becoming him who was not merely the friend of the apostles, but the light of the world, is that charge which he gives them immediately before his ascension. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,"—the conclusion of the age that has been introduced by my appearance. I am with you alway, not by my bodily presence, for immediately after he was taken out of their sight, but I am with you by the Holy Ghost, which I am to send upon you not many days hence, and which is to abide with you for ever.†

The promise of Jesus then implies, according to the plain construction of the words, that the apostles, in executing their commission, were not to be left wholly to their natural powers, but were to be assisted by that illumination and direction of the Spirit which the nature of the commission required; and you may learn the sense which our Lord had of the importance and effect of this promise from one circumstance, that he never makes any distinction between his own words and those of his apostles, but places the doctrines and commandments which they were to deliver upon a footing with those which he had spoken: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."‡ These words plainly imply, that Christians have no warrant to pay less regard to any thing contained in the Epistles than to that which is contained in the Gospels; and teach us, that every doctrine and precept clearly delivered by the apostles, comes to the Christian world with the same stamp of divine authority as the words of Jesus, who spake in the name of him that sent him.

The author of our religion, having thus made the faith of the Christian world to hang upon the teaching of the apostles, gave the most signal manifestation of the fulfilment of that promise which was to qualify them for their office, by the miraculous gifts with which they were endowed on the day of Pentecost, and by the abundance of those gifts which the imposition of their hands was to diffuse through the church. One of the twelve indeed, whose labours in preaching the Gospel were the most abundant and the most extensive, was not present at this manifestation, for Paul was not called to be an apostle till after the day of Pentecost. But it is very remarkable, that the manner of his being called was expressly calculated to supply this deficiency. As he journeyed to Damascus, about noon, to bring the Christians who were there bound to Jerusalem, there shone from heaven a great light around about him. And he heard a voice, saying, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. And I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these

* John xvii. 20, 21.

† Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. See original.

‡ Luke x. 16.

things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; and now I send thee to the Gentiles to open their eyes.* In reference to this manner of his being called, Paul generally inscribes his epistles with these words: Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will or by the commandment of God; and he explains very fully what he meant by the use of this expression, in the beginning of his epistle to the Galatians, where he gives an account of his conversion. "Paul an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead. I neither received the Gospel of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood, neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went unto Arabia."† All that we said of the necessity of inspiration, and of the import of the promise which Jesus made to the other apostles, receives very great confirmation from this history of Paul, who, being called to be an apostle after the ascension of Jesus, received the Gospel by immediate revelation from heaven, and was thus put upon a footing with the rest, both as to his designation, which did not proceed from the choice of man, and as to his qualifications, which were imparted not by human instruction, but by the teaching of the author of Christianity. The Lord Jesus, who appeared to him, might furnish Paul with the same advantages which the other apostles had derived from his presence on earth, and might give him the same assurance of the inhabitation of the Spirit that the promises, which we have been considering, had imparted to those.

III. Inspiration was claimed by the apostles, and their claim may be considered as the interpretation of the promise of their Master.

You will not find the claim to inspiration formally advanced in the Gospels. This omission has sometimes been stated by those superficial critics whose prejudices serve to account for their haste, as an objection against the existence of inspiration. But if you attend to the reason of the omission, you will perceive that it is only an instance of that delicate propriety which pervades all the New Testament.

The Gospels are the record of the great facts which vouch the truth of Christianity. These facts are to be received upon the testimony of men who had been eye-witnesses of them. The foundation of Christian faith being laid in an assent to these facts, it would have been preposterous to have introduced in support of them, that superintendence of the Spirit which preserved the minds of the apostles from error. For there can be no proof of the inspiration of the apostles, unless the truth of the facts be previously admitted. The apostles, therefore, bring forward the evidence of Christianity in its natural order, when they speak in the Gospels as the companions and eye-witnesses of Jesus, claiming that credit which is due to honest men who had the best opportunities of knowing what they declared. This is the language of John.‡ "Many other signs did

* Acts xxvi. 12—18.

† Gal. i. 1, 12, 15, 16, 17.

‡ John xx. 30, 31, and xxi. 24.

Jesus in the presence of his disciples. But these are written that ye may believe, and this is the disciple which testifieth these things." The evangelist Luke appears to speak differently in the introduction to his Gospel;* and opposite opinions have been entertained respecting the information conveyed by that introduction.

There is a difference of opinion, first, with regard to the time when Luke wrote his Gospel. It appears to some to be expressly intimated that he wrote after Matthew and Mark, because he speaks of other Gospels then in circulation; and it is generally understood that John wrote his after the other three. But the manner in which Luke speaks of these other Gospels does not seem to apply to those of Matthew and Mark. He calls them many, which implies that they were more than two, and which would confound these two canonical Gospels with imperfect accounts of our Lord's life, which we know from ancient writers were early circulated, but were rejected after the four Gospels were published. It is hardly conceivable that Luke would have alluded to the two Gospels of Matthew and Mark without distinguishing them from other very inferior productions; and therefore it is probable, that when he used this mode of expression, no accounts of our Lord's life were then in existence but those inferior productions. There appears also to very sound critics to be internal evidence that Luke wrote first. He is much more particular than the other evangelists in his report of our Lord's birth, and of the meetings with his apostles after his resurrection. They might think it unnecessary to introduce the same particulars into their Gospels after Luke. But if they wrote before him, the want of these particulars gives to their Gospels an appearance of imperfection which we cannot easily explain.

The other point suggested by this introduction, upon which there has been a difference of opinion, is, whether Luke, who was not an apostle, wrote his Gospel from personal knowledge, attained by his being a companion of Jesus, or from the information of others. Our translation certainly favours the last opinion; and it is the more general opinion, defended by very able critics. Dr. Randolph, in the first volume of his works, which contains a history of our Saviour's life, supports the first opinion, and suggests a punctuation of the verses, and an interpretation¹ of one word, according to which that opinion may be defended. Read the second and third verses in connexion. *Καθὼς παρῆδοσαν ἡμῖν οἱ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς αὐτοπταὶ καὶ ὑπῆρξαι γενομένοι τοῦ λόγου* *Ἐδοξε καὶ ἡμῖν, παρηκολουθηκοῦσι αὐτῷ πᾶσιν ἀκριβῶς καθέξῃς σοι γράψαι, κρατιστε Θεοφίλε.* By *ἡμῖν* is understood the Christian world, who had received information, both oral and written, from those that had been *αὐτοπταὶ καὶ ὑπῆρξαι*. *Καμῖ* means Luke, who proposed to follow the example of those *αὐτοπταὶ* in writing what he knew; and he describes his own knowledge by the word *παρηκολουθηκοῦσι*, which is more precise than the circumlocution, by which it is translated, "having had perfect understanding of all things." Perfect understanding may be derived from various sources: but *παρηκολουθεῖω* properly means, I go along with as a companion, and derive knowledge from my own observation. And, it is remarkable, that the word is used in this very sense by the Jew-

* Luke i. 1—4.

ish historian Josephus, who published his history not many years after Luke wrote, and who in his introduction represents himself as worthy of credit, because he had not merely inquired of those who knew, but *παρηκολουθηκοτα τοις γεγονοσιν*, which he explains by this expression, *πολλων μεν αυτουργος πραξεων, πλειστων δ' αυτοπτης γενομενος*. If this interpretation is not approved of, then, according to the sense of those verses which is most commonly adopted, Luke will be understood to give in the second verse, an account of that ground upon which the knowledge of the Christian world with regard to these things rested, the reports of the *αυτοπται και υπηρεται*; and to state in the third verse, that he, having collected and collated these reports and employed the most careful and minute investigation, had resolved to write an account of the life of Jesus. Here he does not claim inspiration: he does not even say that he was an eye-witness. But he says that, having like others heard the report of eye-witnesses, he had accurately examined the truth of what they said, and presented to the Christian world the fruit of his researches.

The foundation is still the same as in John's gospel, the report of those in whose presence Jesus did and said what is recorded. To this report are added, 1. The investigation of Luke, a contemporary of the apostles, the companion of Paul in a great part of his journeyings, and honoured by him with this title, "Luke the beloved physician."* 2. The approbation of Paul, who is said by the earliest Christian writers to have revised this gospel, written by his companion, so that it came abroad with apostolical authority. 3. The universal consent of the Christian church, which, although jealous of the books that were then published, and rejecting many that claimed the sanction of the apostles, has uniformly, from the earliest times, put the Gospel of Luke upon a footing with those of Matthew and Mark; a clear demonstration that they who had access to the best information knew that it had been revised by an apostle.

As then the authors of the Gospels appear under the character of eye-witnesses, attesting what they had seen, there would have been an impropriety in their resting the evidence of the essential facts of Christianity upon inspiration. But after the respect which their character and their conduct procured to their testimony, and the visible confirmation which it received from heaven, had established the faith of a part of the world, a belief of their inspiration became necessary. They might have been credible witnesses of facts, although they had not been distinguished from other men. But they were not qualified to execute the office of apostles without being inspired. And therefore, as soon as the circumstances of the church required the execution of that office, the claim which had been conveyed to them by the promise of their Master, and which is implied in the apostolical character, appears in their writings. They instantly exercised the authority derived to them from Jesus, by planting ministers in the cities where they had preached the gospel, by setting every thing pertaining to these Christian societies in order, by controlling the exercise of those miraculous gifts which they had imparted, and by correcting the abuses which happened even in their time. But they de-

* Coloss. iv. 14.

manded, from all who had received the faith of Christ, submission to the doctrines and commandments of his apostles, as the inspired messengers of heaven. "But God hath revealed it," not *them*, as our translators have supplied the accusative, revealed the wisdom of God, the dispensation of the Gospel "unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things which are freely given us of God; which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."* "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord:" *i. e.* Let no eminence of spiritual gifts be set up in opposition to the authority of the apostles, or as implying any dispensation from submitting to it.† "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God."‡ Peter speaking of the epistles of Paul, says, "Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you."§ And John makes the same claim of inspiration for the other apostles, as well as for himself. "We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us."||

The claim to inspiration is clearly made by the apostles in those passages, where they place their own writings upon the same footing with the books of the Old Testament; for Paul, speaking of the *ἱερα γραμματα*, a common expression among the Jews for their scriptures, in which Timothy had been instructed from his childhood, says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God."¶ Peter, speaking of the ancient prophets, says, "The Spirit of Christ was in them;" and "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."** And the quotations of our Lord and his apostles from the books of the Old Testament are often introduced with an expression in which their inspiration is directly asserted. "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias;" "By the mouth of thy servant David thou hast said,"†† &c. &c.

With this uniform testimony to that inspiration of the Jewish scriptures, which was universally believed among that people, you are to conjoin this circumstance, that Paul and Peter in different places rank their own writings with the books of the Old Testament. Paul commands that his epistles should be read in the churches, where none but those books which the Jews believed to be inspired were ever read.‡‡ He says that Christians "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets;" *ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν*,§§ a conjunction which would have been highly improper, if the former had not been inspired as well as the latter: and Peter charges the Christians to "be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles."|||

* Cor. ii. 10, 12, 13.

§ 2 Pet. iii. 15.

** 1 Pet. i. 11. 2 Pet. i. 21.

†† Col. iv. 16.

† 1 Cor. xiv. 37.

¶ 1 John iv. 6.

‡‡ Acts i. 16. iv. 25. xxviii. 25.

§§ Ephes. ii. 20.

‡ 1 Thes. ii. 13.

¶ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

||| 2 Pet. iii. 2.

The nature of the book of Revelation led the apostle John to assert most directly his personal inspiration; for he says that “Jesus sent and signified by his angel to his servant John the things that were to come to pass:” and that the divine person, like the Son of Man, who appeared to him when he was in the spirit, commanded him to write in a book what he saw: and in one of the visions recorded in that book, Rev. xxi. 14, when the dispensation of the gospel was presented to John under the figure of a great city, the new Jerusalem, descending out of heaven, there is one part of the image that is a beautiful expression of that authority in settling the form of the Christian church, and in teaching articles of faith, which the apostles derived from their inspiration: “The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”*

These are only a few of the many passages to the same purpose which will occur to you in reading the New Testament: but it is manifest even from them, that the manner in which the apostles speak of their own writings is calculated to mislead every candid reader, unless they really wrote under the direction of the Spirit of God. So gross and daring an imposture is absolutely inconsistent not only with their whole character, but also with those gifts of the Holy Ghost, of which there is unquestionable evidence that they were possessed; and which, being the natural vouchers of the assertion made by them concerning their own writings, cannot be supposed, upon the principles of sound theism, to have been imparted for a long course of years to persons who continued during all that time asserting such a falsehood, and appealing to those gifts for the truth of what they said.

IV. The claim of the apostles derives much confirmation from the reception which it met with amongst the Christians of their days. It appears from an expression of Peter, that at the time when he wrote his second epistle, the epistles of Paul were classed with the other scriptures, the books of the Old Testament; *i. e.* were accounted inspired writings.† It is well known to those who are versant in the early history of the church, with what care the first Christians discriminated between the apostolical writings, and the compositions of other authors, however much distinguished by their piety, and with what reverence they received those books which were known by their inscription, by the place from which they proceeded, or the manner in which they were circulated, to be the work of an apostle. In Lardner’s *Credibility of the Gospel History* you will find the most particular information upon this subject; and you will perceive that the whole history of the supposititious writings, which appeared in early times, conspires in attesting the veneration in which the authority of the apostles was held by the Christian church. We learn from Justin Martyr that, before the middle of the second century, *τα απομνημονευματα των Αποστολων και τα συγγραμματα των προφητων* were read together in the Christian assemblies; we know that, from the earliest times, the church has submitted to the writings of the apostles as the infallible standard of faith and practice; and we find the ground of this peculiar respect expressed by the first Christian writers as well as by their successors,

* Rev. i. 1, 10—19; xxi. 14.

† 2 Peter iii. 16.

who speak of the writings of the apostles as *θειαὶ γράφαι, ἐξ ἐπιπνοίας ἁγίου πνεύματος*.*

V. The only point that remains to be considered is, whether there be any thing in the books themselves inconsistent with the notion of their being inspired. It is impossible for me to follow the detail into which this point runs. But I may suggest the general heads of answer to the multiplicity of objections which fall under it. Even those who acknowledge the excellence of the general system contained in the New Testament, who admit that it must have been revealed to the authors of the books by the Spirit of God, and that there are some instances in which the clearness of the predictions, and even the majesty of the style imply a peculiar illumination and direction of their minds, even such persons meet, in reading the New Testament, with difficulties which they are unable to reconcile with the notion of inspiration; and if they are stumbled, others, who wish to discredit the truth of Christianity, represent the notion of inspiration as rendered wholly indefensible, and even ridiculous, by the mistakes in small matters, the contradiction, the varieties, and littlenesses that occur in several places, and the numberless instances of a style very far removed from that which the Almighty might be conceived to assume.

When you come to examine these objections, there are two general remarks which it will be of great importance for you to carry in your minds.

1. Recollect that the objectors upon such a subject have great advantage. It is very easy to start difficulties and objections. And when the solution is to be derived from an examination of the context, and from a knowledge of ancient languages and customs, the difficulty or objection may be urged in so specious or lively a manner as to make a deep impression, before the solution can be brought forward. But the diligence, the learning, and sagacity of modern commentators have furnished every student, who wishes the scriptures to be true, with satisfying answers to the most formidable objections against particular parts of them; and it is a general rule which you ought to observe in your study of the scriptures, never to suppose, never to allow the most positive affirmation or the most pointed ridicule to persuade you, that a passage is indefensible, because that measure of information respecting antiquity and of experience in sacred criticism which you possess, does not suggest the manner in which it can be defended. You will find, upon inquiry, that apparent contradictions in the narration of the gospels, or in the doctrine of the epistles, may be easily reconciled; that expressions which have been represented as mean, are justified by the practice of classical writers; that the harsh sense, which single phrases seem to contain, is removed either by a more accurate translation of the original, or by the connection in which they stand; that supposed errors in chronology or geography either disappear upon being closely examined, or arise from some of those trifling variations in the copies of the New Testament which modern criticism has investigated; that those parts of the conduct of Peter and Paul which have been censured are in no

* Lardner's Cred. vol. i. p. 273; vol. iii. p. 230.

respect inconsistent with the general doctrine which they taught; and, upon the whole, that as the general matter of the New Testament could not have been known to any who were not inspired of God, and as the manner in which that matter is delivered appears, the more it is considered, to be the more fit and excellent, so there is nothing throughout all the books unworthy of that measure of inspiration of which we have hitherto spoken.

2. Observe that the objections which have been urged against particular passages of the New Testament are in general of no weight in overturning the doctrine of inspiration, unless you suppose that the authors wrote continually under the influence of what has been called the inspiration of suggestion, *i. e.* that every thought was put into their mind, and every word dictated to them by the Spirit of God. But this opinion, which is probably entertained by many well-meaning Christians, and which has been held by some able defenders of Christianity, is now generally abandoned by those who examine the subject with due care. And the following reasons will satisfy you that it has not been lightly abandoned. It is unnecessary to suppose that this highest degree of inspiration is extended through all the parts of the New Testament, because there are many facts in the gospels, which the apostles might know perfectly from their own observation or recollection, many expressions which would naturally occur to them, many directions and salutations in their epistles, such as were to be expected in that correspondence. It is not only unnecessary to suppose that the highest degree of inspiration was extended through all the parts of the New Testament, but the supposition is really inconsistent with many circumstances that occur there. I shall mention a few. Paul in some instances makes a distinction between the counsels which he gives in matters of indifference, upon his own judgment, and the commandments which he delivers with the authority of an apostle: "I speak this by permission, and not of commandment." "This I command, yet not I, but the Lord:" a distinction for which there could have been no room, had every word been dictated by the Spirit of God.* Paul sometimes discovers a doubt, and a change of purpose as to the time of his journeyings, and other little incidents, which the highest degree of inspiration would have prevented.† It is allowed that there is a degree of imperfection and obscurity, which, in some instances, remains on the style of the sacred writers, and particularly of Paul, which we cannot easily reconcile with the highest degree of inspiration.‡ Once more, there are peculiarities of expression, and a marked manner, by which a person of taste and discernment may clearly distinguish the writings of every one from those of every other. But had all written uniformly under the same inspiration of suggestion, there could not have been a difference of manner corresponding to the difference of character; and the expression used by all might have been expected to be the best possible.

These circumstances lead us to abandon the notion that the apostles wrote under a continual inspiration of suggestion. But they are not in the least inconsistent with that kind of inspiration which we found to be necessary for the purposes of their mission; which is

* 1 Cor. vii. 6, 10.

† 1 Cor. xvi. 3--6, 10, 11.

‡ 2 Peter iii. 16

commonly called an inspiration of direction, and which consists in this, that the writers of the New Testament, although allowed to exercise their own memory and understanding, as far as they could be of use : although allowed to employ their own modes of thinking and expression, as far as there was no impropriety in their being employed, were, by the superintendence of the Spirit, effectually guarded from error while they were writing, and were at all times furnished with that measure of inspiration which the nature of the subject required. In his history every evangelist brings forward those discourses and facts which had made the deepest impression upon his mind ; but while, from the variety which thus naturally takes place in the histories, there arises the strongest proof that there was no collusion, the recollection of every historian was so far assisted, that he gives us no false information ; and by laying together the several accounts, we may attain as complete a view of the transactions recorded as the Spirit of God judged to be necessary. In the book of Acts we see the mind of the apostles gradually led, by the teaching of the Spirit, to a full apprehension of the whole counsel of God. In the Epistles they apply the knowledge which had thus been imparted to them by revelation, in ministering to the edification, the comfort, or reproof of the churches which they had established ; and the Spirit, who had by this time guided them into all truth, abode with them, so that from the words and commandments of the apostles we may learn the truth as it is in Christ Jesus.

It hath pleased God that the Christian world should derive those treasures of divine knowledge which resided in the apostles, not by formal systematical discourses composed for the instruction of future ages, but by the short familiar incidental mention of the Christian doctrines in their epistles. This form of the doctrinal writings of the apostles has been stated as an objection to their being inspired ; but by a little attention you will perceive the great advantages of their being permitted to adopt this form. Our industry is thus quickened in searching the Scriptures. The doctrines are rendered more level to the capacity of the great body of Christians, and more easily recalled to their minds by this mode of being delivered : and the books containing the doctrines are thus made to bring along with them internal marks of authenticity, which could not have belonged to them had they been in another form.* The inscription of the epistle is a sure voucher, transmitted from the earliest times, that a letter had truly been sent by an apostle of Christ to a church. The character of the apostle is marked in his epistle, and the many little circumstances, which his situation or that of the church introduces into an affectionate letter, while they exhibit the natural expressions of Christian benevolence, bring a conviction, more satisfying than that which arises from any testimony, that the apostles of Jesus proceeded, in execution of the charge given them by their Master, to make disciples of all nations.

In the prophecies which the New Testament contains, there must have been the inspiration of suggestion. Neither the words nor the thoughts could there come by the will of man ; and the writers spake

* Paley's *Horæ Paulinæ*.

as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Accordingly Paul introduces his predictions with these words : The Spirit speaketh expressly ; and John, we found, says in the book of Revelation, that he was commanded to write what he saw and heard.

I have explained under this second remark that kind of inspiration, which the different branches of the evidence that has been stated appears to me clearly to establish, and which is now generally considered as all that was necessary for the purposes of the apostolical office. We do not say that every thought was put into the mind of the apostles, and every word dictated to their pen by the Spirit of God. But we say, that by the superintendence of the Spirit, they were at all times guarded from error, and were furnished upon every occasion with the measure of inspiration which the nature of the subject required. Upon this view of the matter, we can easily account for all the circumstances that are commonly urged as objections against the notion of inspiration. We may even admit that the apostles were liable to err in their conduct, and were left ignorant of some things which they wished to know : and at the same time we have all that security against misrepresentations of fact, or error in doctrine, which the nature of the commission given to the apostles and the importance of the truths declared by them render necessary for our faith. By this kind of inspiration, while a provision is made for the introduction of those internal marks of authenticity by which the Bible is distinguished above every other book in the world, there is also a perfect fulfilment of the promise given to the apostles by Jesus, a justification of the claim which their writings contain, and a rational account of that entire submission which the Christian church in every age has yielded to the authority of the apostles.

Here then is the ground upon which I rest my foot, and the point from which I desire to be considered as setting out in my Lectures upon Divinity. Jesus was a teacher sent from God. His apostles, who were commanded by him to publish his doctrine to the world, received, in fulfilment of his promise, such a measure of the visible gifts of the Spirit as attested their commission, and such a measure of internal illumination and direction, as rendered their writings the infallible standard of Christian truth. From hence it follows, that every thing which is clearly contained in the gospels and epistles, or which may be fairly deduced from the words there used, is true ; and that every thing which cannot be so proved is no part of the doctrine that Christians are required to believe. After we have attained this point, sound criticism becomes the foundation of theology. My business is not to frame a system of divinity, but to delineate that system which the Scriptures teach, by a clear exposition of the passages in which it is taught : and to defend it, by rescuing the Scriptures from misinterpretation. We shall be very much assisted in this course by our knowledge of the Greek language. The Greek Testament will be our constant companion ; and the best preparation for what you are to learn from me is to apply the knowledge, which you have acquired elsewhere, in rendering the Greek Testament familiar to your minds.

The doctrine of the Inspiration of Scripture is touched upon in all the complete defences

of Christianity ; of most of which you have both an Index and an Abridgment in Leland's View of the Deistical Writers.

Bishop Burnet has treated it shortly in his Exposition of the sixth article of the Church of England.

There are many excellent Sermons of English divines upon this subject. I mention particularly Archbishop Secker's, in the third volume of his works.

And there is a rational, masterly Essay upon this subject, in Bishop Benson's Paraphrase on the Epistles of Paul.

Potter's *Prælectiones Theologicæ in Opera Theologica*, tom. iii.

Le Clerc's Letters on Inspiration, with Lowth's Answer.

Randolph's Works.

Wakefield on Inspiration.

Middleton.

Prettyman's Elements of Christian Theology.

Watson's Apology for the Bible and for Christianity.

Preliminary Essays prefixed to Dr. Macknight's new translation of the Epistles.

Dick on the Inspiration of Scripture.

Jones's Canon of Scripture.

Doddridge.

Paley.

Marsh's *Michælis*.

CHAPTER II.

PECULIAR DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY.

HAVING established the divine inspiration of the books of the New Testament, we have next to learn from this infallible guide that system of doctrine which characterizes the Christian religion. It is presumptuous and childish to busy ourselves in fancying what that system ought to be. If the books containing the Gospel of Christ were really written by men under the direction of the Spirit of God, they will teach us the truth without mixture of error: and all our speculations vanish before the authoritative declarations which they bring.

I need not occupy time with delineating the great truths of natural religion. These must be the same in every true system, because they are unchangeable; and it occurred formerly, in stating the evidences of Christianity, that this revelation carries along with it one strong presumption of its divine original, by giving in the simplest language, and the plainest form, views of the nature of God, and of the duty of man, more clear, more consistent, and more exalted than are to be found in any other writings. If you were to throw out of the Scriptures all the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, there would remain a complete system of natural religion, in comparison with which, even the speculations of the enlightened and virtuous sage of Athens appear low and partial. But it is of these peculiar doctrines that Christian theology consists; and I mean at present to prepare for examining them particularly, by stating them in a short connected view. I cannot propose to meet in this view the sentiments of all the different sects of Christians; for if I were to attempt to accommodate the sketch that is to be given, to the peculiar tenets of some sects, I should be obliged to leave out several doctrines which appear to me most essential to Christianity. But although I cannot meet the sentiments of opposite sects, I do not wish to derive this short system from the discriminating tenets, or the peculiar language of any one sect: I wish to avoid the use of any terms that are not scriptural, and to present to you the form of sound words which is taught by the apostles themselves. We shall have enough of controverted opinions when we come to attend to the different facts of the system. But it seems to me proper that you should carry in your minds a general distinct conception of the subjects upon which the controversies turn, before we be entangled in that thorny path.

The foundation of the Gospel is this, that men are sinners. If you take away this proposition, the whole system is left without meaning:

if you receive it in its full import, you perceive the use of the different parts, and the harmony with which they unite in producing the effect that is ascribed to the whole. The proposition is often enunciated in Scripture; but the truth of it is independent of the authority of any revelation, and must be admitted by every candid observer, whether he believes or rejects the divine mission of Jesus. Although different states of society have exhibited different forms of wickedness, authentic history does not record any in which human virtue has appeared pure. A great part of the business of every government is to interpose restraints upon the evil passions of the subjects: yet so ineffectual are those restraints, that the peace of the best constituted society is often disturbed by enormous crimes, while there are transgressions of virtue which elude the law, that indicate a deeper depravity of mind than those enormities which are punished; and even the best of the sons of men, those who by the innocence of their lives are exempted not only from the punishments, but even from the censures of human society, have the consciousness of imperfection, of failing, and demerit.

The Scriptures connect this abounding of iniquity with a transaction which took place soon after the creation of Adam. "By one man," says Paul, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:—By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; in Adam all die."* This is the commentary made by an apostle upon the third chapter of Genesis; and when we take that chapter, the commentary of Paul, and other incidental expressions in connexion, we are led by the Scriptures to consider the transgressions of the first parents of the human race as altering the condition of their posterity, rendering this earth a less comfortable, and less virtuous habitation, than without that transgression it would have been, and introducing sin, with all its attendant misery, amongst a part of the rational creation who were made at first after the image of God.

Something analogous to this effect of the transgression of our first parents, may often be observed in human connections. And we are guarded against wantonly rejecting the Scripture account of this early transaction, as incredible or inconsistent with the government of God, when we see, in numberless instances, the sins of some persons extending their baleful influence to the minds and the fortunes of others, a father corrupting the manners of his children, entailing upon them disease, disgrace, poverty and vice, and thus reducing them by his wickedness to a calamitous state, which, had they sprung from other parents, it appears to us they might have avoided.

To this it must be added, that in the present condition of the human race there are many symptoms of degradation. The combat between the higher and the lower parts of our nature, the temptations to vice which every thing around us presents, the judgments which are often executed by changes upon the face of nature, that abridgment of the comforts of life which arises from our own faults, or those of others, and the violence which is done to our feelings and our affections by the manner in which we are called out of the world; all this, and

* Rom. v. 12, 18. 1 Cor. xv. 22.

much more of the same kind, indicates a disordered state, and accords with the slight incidental openings which the Scriptures give us into that ancient transaction, to which they trace the sin and misery of mankind. The effects of this transaction continued in the world notwithstanding all the efforts of philosophy, good government, and civilization. Neither the vigilant education and rigorous discipline prescribed in some ancient states, nor the circumspection and mortification learned in some ancient schools, were able to cleanse the heart of any one individual from every kind of defilement, or to maintain a life, in all respects blameless. And, whatever remedy the progress of improvement may be conceived to have applied to the other evils which proceed from sin, there is one standing memorial of its power, which defies the wit and the strength of man. None can deliver his own soul, or the soul of his brother from death. "It is appointed unto *all* men once to die."^{*} But death is represented in the Scriptures as the fruit of sin; and therefore the continuance of death is one of those practical lessons which the Almighty often administers, which is independent of speculation, but, being by its nature a strong confirmation of the discoveries that are made, is sufficient to teach all who receive the Scriptures, that the transaction to which they ascribe the introduction of death, has not exhausted all its force.

The gospel then proceeds upon a fact, which was not created by the revelation, but would have been true, although the gospel had not appeared, that that part of the reasonable offspring of God who inhabit this earth are sinners, and that their efforts to extricate themselves out of this condition had proved ineffectual. But sin is repugnant to our moral feelings, and excites our abhorrence. How much more odious must it appear in the sight of Him, whom natural religion and the declarations of Scripture teach us to consider as infinitely holy! We see only a small portion of human wickedness. But all the demerit of every individual sinner, and the whole sum of iniquity committed throughout the earth, are continually present to the eyes of Him with whose nature they are most inconsistent. The sins of men are transgressions of the law given them by their Creator, an insult to his authority, a violation of the order which he had established, a diminution of the happiness which he had spread over his works. It is unknown to us what connections there are amongst different parts of the universe. But it is manifest that no government can subsist if the laws are transgressed with impunity. It is very conceivable that the other creatures of God might be tempted to disobedience, if the transgressions of the human race received no chastisement. And therefore, as every temptation to disobey laws which bring peace to the obedient, is really an introduction to misery, it appears most becoming the Almighty, both as the Ruler and the Father of the universe, to execute his judgments against the human race. Accordingly the Scriptures record many awful testimonies of the divine displeasure with sin; and they represent the whole world as the children of wrath, guilty before God, and under the curse, because they are the children of disobedience. It is not in the nature

^{*} Heb. ix. 27.

of repentance to avert those evils which past transgressions had deserved. But we have seen that men were unable to forsake their sins; and we cannot form a conception of any mode, consistent with the honour and the great objects of the divine government, by which a creature who continues to transgress the divine laws, can stop the course of that punishment, which is the fruit of his transgression.

In this situation, when the reasonings of nature fail, and every appearance in nature conspires to show that hope is presumptuous, the revelation of the gospel is fitted by its peculiar character to enlighten and revive the human mind. We there learn that God, who is rich in mercy, moved by compassion for the work of his hands, for the great love wherewith he loved the world, conceived a plan for delivering the children of Adam from that sin and misery out of which they were unable to extricate themselves.* Having foreseen, before the foundation of the world, that they would yield to the temptation of an evil spirit, and abuse that liberty which forms an essential part of their nature, he comprehended in the same eternal counsel a purpose to create, and a purpose to save.† Immediately after the transgression of the first man there was some discovery of the gracious plan. At the same time that a curse is pronounced upon the ground, and death is declared to be the punishment of sin, there is an intimation of future deliverance in these words: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."‡ The promise was unfolded, and the plan gradually opened through a succession of dispensations, all conspiring in their place to produce the fulness of time, when the plan was executed by the manifestation of that glorious person whom prophecy had announced. The light of nature does not give any notice of the existence of this person. But as the importance of the office which he executed renders his character most interesting to the human race, the Scriptures declare that he was with God in the beginning, that he had glory with the Father before the world was, that by him God made the world, that he was God, but that veiling his glory, although he could not divest himself of the nature of God, he was born in a miraculous manner, was made in the likeness of men, took part of flesh and blood, and dwelt with those whom he is not ashamed to call his brethren.§ The purpose for which this extraordinary messenger visited the earth, was declared by the angel who announced the singular manner of his birth: "Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins."|| John his forerunner thus marked him out: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."¶ He said of himself, "I am come to call sinners to repentance; to give my life a ransom for many."** And the charge which he gave to his apostles, and which they executed in all their discourses and writings, was this, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name amongst all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.†† These expressions

* Ephes. ii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Rom. iii. 19; v. 12. Gal. iii. 10, 22. Col. iii. 5, 6, 7.

† Ephes. iii. 11.

‡ Gen. iii. 15.

§ John i. 1, 2, 3, 14; xvii. 5. Heb. i. 2; ii. 14. Phil. ii. 6, 7. Luke i. 26—38.

|| Matth. i. 21.

¶ John i. 29.

** Matth. ix. 13: xx. 28.

†† Luke xxiv. 47.

imply that the peculiarity of the Jewish state was concluded by the appearance of this prophet, and that the benefit of his manifestation was to extend to all nations. The same expressions imply also that the nature of that benefit was accommodated to what we have found the situation of mankind to require. In fulfilment of that character of a Saviour which he assumed, he not only taught men the will of God by precept and by example, unfolded that future state in which they are to receive according to the deeds done in the body, and enforced the practice of righteousness by every motive addressed to the understanding and the affections, but he voluntarily submitted to the most grievous sufferings, and the most cruel death, as the method ordained in the counsel of heaven for procuring their deliverance from sin. There is no mode of expression that we can devise, which is not employed by Scripture to convey this conception, that the death of Christ was not barely a confirmation of the truth of Christianity, an example of disinterested benevolence and of heroic virtue, but a true sacrifice for sin, offered by him to God the Father, in order to avert the punishment which the sins of men deserved, and to render it consistent with the character of the Deity and the honour of the divine laws, to forgive men their trespasses. "I am the good shepherd," says Jesus; "the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."* "God hath set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past."† "We are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."‡ The natural conclusion which any person, whose mind is not warped by a particular system, will draw from these and numberless other expressions of the same kind, is this, that as the scheme for the deliverance of the human race originated from the love of God the Father, so it was accomplished by the instrumentality of that person, who is called in Scripture the Son of God.

As the effect of this instrumentality is clearly declared in Scripture, so it is analogous to one part of the divine procedure which we have often occasion to observe. The whole course of human affairs is carried on by alternate successions of wisdom and folly. Evils are incurred, and they are remedied. The good affections or the generosity of some are employed to retrieve the faults or the misfortunes of others: and the condescension and zeal, with which the talents of an exalted character are exerted in some cause which did not properly belong to him, are often seen to restore that order and happiness which the extravagance of vice appeared to have destroyed. The dispensation revealed in the Gospel is the same in kind with these instances, although infinitely exalted above them in magnificence and extent. We see there sin and misery entering into the world by the transgression of one man, the effects spreading through the whole race, and the remedy brought by the generous interposition of a person who had no share in the disaster, whose power of doing good was called forth purely by compassion for the distressed, and, in opposition to all the obstacles raised by an evil spirit, was exerted with perseverance and success, in removing the deformity and disorder which

* John x. 11.

† Rom. iii. 25.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 18. 19.

ne had introduced into the creation. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."* "He took part of flesh and blood, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage."†

That the interposition of the Son of God was effectual in promoting the purpose for which it was made, and that his death did really overcome that evil spirit, who is styled the prince of this world,‡ was declared by his resurrection, and by the gifts which in fulfilment of his promise were sent upon his apostles after his ascension.§ This is the Scripture proof, "that Jesus is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him."|| So speaks Peter in one of his first sermons.¶ "The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things: and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." i. e. Our testimony of his resurrection, confirmed by the witness of the Holy Ghost, is the evidence that God hath exalted him to be a Saviour. He is now, by the appointment of God, the dispenser of those blessings which he died to purchase;*** the Mediator of the new covenant, which was sealed by his blood, and which is established upon better promises,†† of the fulfilment of which we receive perfect assurance from the power that is given to him in heaven and in earth.‡‡ Pardon, grace, and consolation, flow from him as their proprietor, who hath acquired by his sufferings the right of distributing gifts to men.§§ "Being justified by his blood, we have peace with God, and access to the Father through him.|||| He is now the advocate of his people,¶¶ who appears in the presence of God for them;*** "who ever lives to make intercession,"††† and by whom their prayers and services are rendered acceptable.‡‡‡ He directs the course of his Providence, so as to promote their welfare, not by abolishing the present consequences of sin, but by rendering them medicinal to the soul:§§§ and death, which is still allowed to continue as a standing memorial of the evil of sin, shall at length be destroyed by the working of his mighty power, which is able to quicken the bodies that had been mingled with the dust of the earth.||||| "I am," says he, "the resurrection and the life."¶¶¶ "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth."**** "Power is given him over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as he will."†††† And the crown of life that shall be conferred at the last upon those for whom it is prepared, is represented in Scripture

* 1 John iii. 8.

† Heb. ii. 14, 15.

‡ John xiv. 30.

§ Rom. i. 4. Acts ii. 32, 33.

|| Heb. vii. 25.

¶ Acts v. 30—32.

*** Heb. xii. 2.

†† Heb. viii. 4; ix. 12, 15.

‡‡ Matth. xxviii. 18.

§§ Rom. v. 1, 2, 9, 11. Eph. ii. 18.

|| Ephes. iv. 8.

¶¶ 1 John ii. 1.

*** Heb. ix. 24.

††† Rom. viii. 34.

‡‡‡ Rev. viii. 3, 4.

§§§ Rom. vii. 28.

|||| Phil. iii. 21.

¶¶¶ John ii. 25.

**** John v. 2, 29.

†††† John xvii. 2.

not as a recompense which they have earned, but as the gift of God through him. "The wages of sin is death; but eternal life is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

In this manner the blessings which that divine Person who interposed for the salvation of mankind is able to bestow, imply a complete deliverance from the evils of sin. "As through one man's offence, death reigned by one, so they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one Jesus Christ."†

Hitherto we have confined our attention to the interposition of that Person, who appeared upon earth to save his people from their sins. But we are introduced in the gospel to the knowledge of a third Person, who concurs in the salvation of mankind; who proceedeth from the Father, who is sent by the Son as his Spirit,‡ whose power is spoken of in exalted terms,§ to whom the highest reverence is challenged,|| and who in all the variety of his operations, is one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every one severally as he will.¶ One God and Father of all is known by the works of nature: the Son of God is made known by revelation, because the world which he had made stood in need of his interposition to redeem it: and the Spirit is made known by the same revelation, because the benefits of this redemption are applied through his agency. Our knowledge in this way grows with our necessities. We learn how inadequate our faculties are to comprehend the divine nature, when we see such important discoveries superinduced upon the investigations of the most enlightened reason. And we learn also that the measures of knowledge, which the Father of Spirits sees meet to communicate, are not intended to amuse our minds with speculation, and to gratify curiosity, but are immediately connected with the grounds of our comfort and hope. They comprehend all that is necessary for us in our present circumstances. But they may be far from exhausting the subject revealed: and from the very great addition which the revelation of the gospel has made to our knowledge, it is natural for us to infer that creatures in another situation, or we ourselves in a more advanced state of being, may see distinctly many things, which we now in vain attempt to penetrate. The mode in which the Son and the Spirit subsist, and the nature of their connexion with the Father, however much they have been the subject of human speculation, are nowhere revealed in Scripture. But the offices of these persons, being of infinite importance to us, are revealed with such hints only of their nature, as may satisfy us that they are qualified for these offices.

We have seen the office of the Son in the redemption of the world, the right which he acquired by his perfect obedience and suffering to dispense the blessings of his purchase. It is in the dispensation of these blessings that the office of the Spirit appears. This office commenced from the earliest times: "For he spake by the mouth of all the holy prophets, who prophesied, since the world began, of the

* Rom. vi. 23.

† Rom. v. 17.

‡ John xv. 26.

§ Acts iv. 31, 33. Rom. viii. 11, 26. 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18.

|| Heb. ix. 14; x. 29.

¶ 1 Cor. xii. 4—11.

sufferings of Christ, and of the glory that should follow.”* To his agency the miraculous conception of the Son of man is ascribed.† He descended upon Jesus at his baptism:‡ he was given to him without measure during his ministry;§ and after his ascension he was manifested in the variety and fulness of those gifts which distinguished the first preachers of Christianity.|| But all these branches of the office of the Spirit, so necessary for confirming the truth, and for diffusing the knowledge of the Christian religion, were only the pledges of those ordinary influences, by which the same Divine Person continues in all ages to apply the blessings which are thus revealed.

The ordinary influences of the Spirit are represented in Scripture as opposed to all those circumstances in the present condition of human nature, which indispose men for receiving such a religion as the gospel. Thus you read, that “the natural man receiveth not the things of God; they are foolishness to him, because they are spiritually discerned.”¶ But the spirit of wisdom and revelation is given to Christians, that “the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they may know what is the hope of their calling.”** You read, that “the carnal mind is enmity against God, and cannot be subject to his law: but they that are led by the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit.”†† You read of a complacency in their own righteousness, which prevents many from submitting themselves to the righteousness of God.‡‡ But the Spirit casts down every high thought which exalteth itself.§§

In all this there is nothing contrary to the reasonable nature of man. We have daily experience of the influence which one mind has over another, by presenting objects in the light best fitted to command assent and conviction, by suggesting forcible motives, by overruling objections, by addressing every generous principle, and exciting every latent spark of good affection. You sometimes see or hear of persons formed for commanding others, not by force, but by an acknowledged eminence of talents and virtues: and you often see men conducted by a skilful exposition to the clear apprehension of truths which seemed to be above their capacity, and irresistibly, yet freely, led, by well-adapted persuasion, to exertions which they considered as beyond their power. All this is a very faint image indeed, but it may assist you in forming some conception of the action of the Spirit of God upon the mind of man. He, who knows every spring of that heart which he formed, every method of approach, every secret wish, every reluctant thought, and whose power over mind is as entire as that which he exercises over matter, can in various ways illuminate the darkest understanding, and bend the most stubborn will, without destroying that freedom which is the essential character of the being upon whom he acts. The influence is efficacious, and the purpose of him from whom it proceeds cannot be defeated. Yet the being who is thus moved has as little feeling of constraint, acts as much from choice and deliberation, as if the views and motives had occurred to

* 1 Pet. i. 11.

† Luke i. 35.

‡ Luke iii. 22.

§ John iii. 34.

|| Acts ii. 4.

¶ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

** Ephes. i. 17, 18.

†† Rom. viii. 5, 7.

‡‡ Rom. x. 3.

§§ 2 Cor. x. 5.

his own mind without a guide, or had been suggested to him by any of his neighbours. Hence, although this influence of the Spirit is expressed in Scripture by a new creation,* and the quickening of those who were dead,† although our Lord hath said, “Except a man be born again of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” i. e. become a Christian; and again, “No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him,”‡ yet the persons thus created, quickened, and drawn, are said to be “willing in a day of power.”§ “Where the Spirit of the Lord is,” says the apostle, “there is liberty,”|| the liberty which belongs to those whose understandings know the truth, whose affections are orderly, and who are not the servants of sin. The gospel is styled “the perfect law of liberty.”¶ A Christian is significantly called “the Lord’s freeman.”** And Jesus said to those who believed on him, “If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”††

Such is the nature of that influence which the Scriptures represent the Spirit of God as exerting upon every true Christian. The immediate effect of that influence is called in Scripture faith; a word which, according to its etymology, *πιστις*, denotes a firm persuasion of truth, but which, in the Scripture sense of the word, comprehends all the sentiments and affections which naturally arise from a firm persuasion of the truth of Christianity; a cordial acquiescence in the doctrines of the gospel, a thankful acceptance of the method of salvation from sin there offered, a reliance upon the promises of God, and a submission to his will. Although an acquaintance with the historical evidences of the truth of Christianity be the natural foundation of a persuasion of its truth, yet a person may have studied these evidences with care, and may be able to answer the objections that have been urged against them, who, at the same time, from some wrongness of mind, does not attain to the sentiments and dispositions implied under faith. The Scriptures hold forth examples of this in the enemies of our Lord during his life, who had clearer evidences of his divine mission before their eyes than we are able to attain with all our investigation, and in many of those, who, by teaching and doing wonderful works in his name, had that evidence within themselves, yet are for ever separated from him by his own declaration.‡‡ And these examples will not appear strange to any person who has bestowed a philosophical attention upon the inconsistencies in the human mind, and the small influence which deductions of the understanding often appear to have upon the heart. On the other hand, both the Scriptures and our own experience afford many examples of persons, who, with limited information and narrow powers of reasoning, yet by a tractable disposition, a love of the truth, and a fairness of mind, have attained to what the Scriptures call faith, and become the disciples of Christ indeed. To this purpose Jesus says, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”§§ And again, “Except

* 2 Cor. v. 17.

† Ephes. ii. 1.

‡ John iii. 3, 5; vi. 44.

§ Psalm cx. 3.

|| 2 Cor. iii. 17.

¶ James i. 25.

** 1 Cor. vii. 22.

†† John viii. 36.

‡‡ Matt. vii. 22, 23.

§§ Matt. xi. 25, 26.

ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven ;” *i. e.* Except ye receive the truth with that freedom from prejudice, that desire of learning, and that simplicity of intention, which are all implied in the character of children, ye cannot become Christians.* In another place our Lord says, “ If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God ;”† and he explains the good soil, in which the seed fell that produced an hundred fold, by a good and honest heart, in which they keep the word, who bring forth fruit with patience.‡ All these expressions imply not merely that faith is an exercise of understanding, but that a certain preparation of heart is requisite for it ; and hence you will perceive that, although faith be a reasonable act proceeding upon evidence, there is room for the influence of the Spirit in disposing the mind to attend to the evidence, and to see its force, in overcoming prejudice, and carrying home the truth with power to the heart. Accordingly the apostle Paul says expressly, that faith is “ the gift of God ;”§ and this declaration is only expressing, in one sentence, the uniform doctrine of Scripture upon this subject.

Faith, which is thus produced by the influence of the Spirit of God upon the mind of man, is the character with which a participation of the blessings of the gospel is always connected in Scripture. These blessings were acquired, and are dispensed by the Lord Jesus. But they are applied by his Spirit only to them who believe. “ God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish.” “ He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; he that believeth not shall be damned.” “ This is the word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” We are said to be “ justified by faith ;” and the only direction which Paul gave to the jailer, when he cried out, “ What must I do to be saved ?” was this, “ Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”||

Declarations of this kind abound in Scripture. But there are two mistakes which such declarations are apt to occasion ; and both are so opposite to the Scripture system, that they require to be mentioned in this short account of it.

The first mistake, into which you may be led by the Scripture declarations concerning faith, is to imagine that faith is the procuring cause of our salvation ; that because Christ says, “ this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent,” any person who does the work receives the blessings of the gospel as the wages which he has earned. But such an opinion contradicts all the views which we have hitherto deduced from Scripture. For the gospel being a salvation from sin, those who are to be saved are considered as sinners, until they partake of the salvation. The investiture with a certain character is indeed a present, and in some sense an immediate effect of the salvation, and is so inseparably connected with it, as to be the Scripture mark, that a person has “ passed from death unto life.” But being an effect, it cannot in the nature of things be a

* Matt. xviii. 3.

† John vii. 17.

‡ Luke viii. 15.

§ Ephes. ii. 8.

|| John iii. 16. Mark xvi. 16. Rom. x. 8, 9 ; v. i. Acts xvi. 30, 31.

cause of that from which it proceeds; and therefore the Scriptures speak in perfect consistency with themselves, when they declare, "God hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus."* "When we were dead in sins, he quickened us together with Christ, for by grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."† Faith is the instrument by which the Spirit of God applies to us the blessings which Christ hath acquired the right of dispensing. But there is no merit in the instrument. Since all had sinned and come short of the glory of God, "we are justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;" and he is "the Lord our righteousness."

The second mistake into which you may be led by the Scripture declaration concerning faith is, that faith is the only thing which is required of a Christian. If all that Paul said to the jailer was, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," it seems to follow that, if he believed, it mattered not how far he disregarded every other precept of the gospel. But the Scriptures, by all their descriptions of faith, mean to teach us that it cannot be alone. It is the principle of a divine life, by which we are united to Christ and derive from him grace and strength for the discharge of every duty. It works by love, and purifies the heart, and overcomes the world. So we read in Scripture of a life of faith, of the obedience of faith, of faith being dead, because it is without works. "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law."‡ Here then you will mark the place which good works hold in the Christian system. They are not the ground of our acceptance with God, for the whole world, according to this system, being guilty before God, we must have remained for ever excluded from his favour had good works been the condition upon which our being received into it was suspended. "Therefore," the apostle Paul says, "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God." Neither are those the good works of a Christian, which, although fit in themselves, and profitable to those who do them, and to others, are done merely upon considerations of reason, honour, and conscience, which ought to actuate the mind in every situation. But the good works required in the gospel flow from faith, *i. e.* they are performed in the spirit of a Christian, from the motives suggested by a firm persuasion of the truth of the gospel. Good works, therefore, are stated in Scripture as the fruits and evidences of faith, the necessary effect of the operation of the Spirit of God. "For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them;"§ and there thus appears to be the most perfect consistency between the doctrine of Paul and that of James. Paul says that we are not justified by any thing that we can do ourselves, but freely by grace, through faith in the blood of Christ. James says, Show me thy faith by thy works:

* 2 Tim. i. 9.

† Ephes. ii. 1, 8.

‡ Gal. v. 6; ii. 20. Acts xv. 9. 1 John v. 4. Rom. i. 5: iii. 31. James ii. 12.

§ Ephes. ii. 10.

faith without works is dead, as the body without the spirit. And he concludes, that a man is justified not by faith only, *i. e.* by such a faith as does not produce what Paul had stated to be the constant effect of true faith, but by that faith which by works is made perfect.

As the gospel calls men, by motives peculiar to itself, and with an energy which no other system ever possessed, to the practice of righteousness, so it is uniformly supposed in Scripture, that the followers of Jesus are to be distinguished by the zeal and constancy with which they abound in the work of the Lord. "The question of our Lord, "What do ye more than others?" and such expressions as these, "being dead to sin," "crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts," "being alive unto God," "putting on the new man," "walking after the Spirit," imply an eminence and uniformity of virtues, a light which shines before men. That innocence which the laws of our country enjoin, that measure of virtue which a regard to public opinion or even the principles of natural religion require, falls very far short of the evangelical standard. It is the duty of a Christian to aspire after perfection, yet never to count that he has attained it; to forsake the vices of others, and to endeavour to excel their virtues, yet to be deeply sensible of his own imperfection, and ready to allow his brethren all the praise which they deserve; to fill up his life with the various exertions of active, diffusive, disinterested benevolence, yet to guard against the emotions of vanity, and that spirit of ostentation by which a good deed loses all its value; and to ascribe the honour of his progress in virtue, not to his natural disposition, to his own diligence and watchfulness, or to any concurrence of favourable circumstances, but to that God who called him to the knowledge of the Gospel, to that Saviour by the faith of whom he lives, and to that Spirit by whose influence he is sanctified.

The Scriptures assure us that the good works which thus proceed from faith, although imperfect in degree and mingled with many infirmities, are well pleasing in the sight of God through Jesus Christ. He, in allusion to the Jewish law, is represented as the high priest over the house of God, who, having yielded a perfect obedience to the divine law, has no occasion to make any offering for his own sins, but appears in the presence of God for his people.* And the good works which they perform through the strength which his Spirit imparts, are styled spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by him.† The Almighty lifts the light of his countenance upon those who offer this sacrifice; he admits them into his family; he rejoices over them to do them good; he chastens them with the tenderness of a father; he seals them by his Spirit unto the day of redemption; and he will receive them hereafter to that incorruptible inheritance, which is not due to their services, but a reward of grace, purchased by the death of Christ, secured by his intercession, and "reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

It appears then from the Scriptures, that the religion of Jesus, having for its ultimate design the removal of those evils which sin

* Heb. vii. 25—28.

† 1 Peter ii. 5.

had introduced, destroys the present dominion of sin in all true Christians. Its tendency is to restore upon the soul of man that image of God after which he was made, to revive those sentiments and desires which constitute the excellence and dignity of his nature, to elevate his affections from earth to heaven, and, at the same time, to enforce the discharge of those relative duties which his present condition renders necessary to the comfort of society. It is plain that if this religion were universally acknowledged and obeyed, the character of every individual would be rescued from the degradation of vice, and assimilated to the most exalted beings in the universe; that the happiness of human life would receive the most substantial and permanent improvement, and that the abode of the human race upon earth would be a stage in the progress of their existence to the perfection and the joys of heaven. It is not possible to conceive any design more worthy of the father of mankind, and more beneficial to his creatures. There is implied in the nature of this design the strongest obligation upon every reasonable being to whom the knowledge of it is communicated, to co-operate in its accomplishment: and it is especially to be remarked, in a view of the Scripture system, that this co-operation is not only required by precept, but is recommended by the most illustrious examples. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost condescended to take a part in this scheme; the angels attend to the progress of it, rejoice in the conversion of a sinner, and are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation." All the prophets and holy men in ancient times, of whom the Scriptures speak, looked forward to it, and contributed in some measure to its approach. And now that it is manifested, every one is called upon to be a worker together with God. The whole Christian world is represented as one great society, united, by their submission to the same Master and by the guidance of the same Spirit in following "after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord;" and "after the things—wherewith one may edify another."

We are warranted to speak of this co-operation in accomplishing the great design of the gospel; for although the Scriptures represent the blessings there revealed as acquired by the interposition of the Son of God, and the character necessary in order to a participation of them as originating from the influence of the Spirit, yet they uniformly address us in a style which supposes that there is something for us to do. We are commanded to "work out our own salvation," and we are required to help our brethren in the good ways of the Lord. We soon bewilder ourselves in our speculations, when we attempt to settle the boundaries between the agency of God and the agency of man. But the Scriptures, without condescending to enter into these discussions, abound in exhortations; and we cannot suppose that our shallow reasonings upon subjects so infinitely above our comprehension, will be sustained as an excuse for neglecting to obey precepts so often repeated and so plainly expressed.

The Scriptures mention various means, which the Spirit of God employs, in producing that faith which is the principle of the Christian character, and those good works which flow from this principle. But they have nowhere furnished any marks to distinguish the natural operation of these means from that agency of the Spirit, with-

out which they are ineffectual. "The wind," says our Lord, "bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The Spirit may act as he will, but there is no warrant to expect that the conversion of any individual will be brought about in a sudden sensible manner. The exercises of a pious education, the habits of virtuous youth, the impressions fixed upon the mind by the continued instruction and conversation of the wise, may have so gradually disposed a person for receiving the Gospel in faith, that he shall not be able to mark any great change which ever took place in the state of his soul, or the time when faith, the gift of God, was imparted to him by the Spirit. Yet this man may appear to be a Christian indeed, by bringing forth in his life those fruits of the Spirit, which are the evidences of faith. The assurance which arises from these evidences may give him that "peace of God which passeth understanding ;" and the Spirit itself may bear witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. From hence we deduce the duty of using the means by which the influences of the Spirit are ordinarily conveyed, and the presumption of all who, undervaluing the means, say that they wait for an extraordinary instantaneous illapse of the Spirit. Hence too you perceive the reason why the Scriptures represent the earliest Christians, and speak of Christians in all succeeding ages, as a society distinguished by certain regulations and outward ordinances. If the Spirit operated immediately upon every individual, all these would be a yoke of ceremonies. But if the heavenly gift, as well as the common bounties of Providence, is to be dispensed by the instrumentality of men, the establishment of what we call a church is necessary for "perfecting the saints, and for edifying the body of Christ." So speaks the apostle Paul. "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed ? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard ? And how shall they hear without a preacher ? And how shall they preach except they be sent ? So faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* The promise of our Lord to his apostles, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world," seems, by the terms of it, to extend to a much longer period than their ministry required ; and that it does really imply the presence of Jesus with his church in all ages, not indeed by extraordinary inspiration, but by his countenance and protection, is manifest from another declaration of his, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against my church," and from the practice of his apostles, who ordained teachers, overseers of the flock, in every city where they preached, and who made provision that the instruction which they gave by word or writing should be transmitted to future generations. "The things," says Paul to Timothy, the minister of Ephesus, "That thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."† Some of the epistles of Paul contain a delineation of the form of those churches to the ministers of which he writes, and directions concerning the conduct of the several office-bearers, and concerning the exercise of discipline. There can be no

* Rom. x. 14, 15.

† 2 Tim. ii. 2

doubt that this form had been established by his authority; and it is natural for all Christian churches to endeavour to show that their ecclesiastical institutions do not depart far from it. Yet it is nowhere said that this ought to be the form of the church universal: and there are expressions in the epistles of Paul which imply that Christians are allowed to use a prudent accommodation to circumstances in matters of external order. The spirit of Christianity calls our attention to things infinitely more important than the varieties of church government. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost:"* and those societies, whose institutions approach nearest to the apostolical practice, have no warrant to condemn their brethren, who have been led by a different progress of society to establishments farther removed from it.

But amidst this difference in matters of order, which the Scriptures do not condemn, there are points resulting from the design of their institution in which all churches ought to agree, otherwise they are not the churches of Christ. They must acknowledge him as their head and master, teaching no other doctrine than that form of sound doctrine, which is to be gathered from the writings of his apostles. They must maintain that spiritual worship which he hath substituted in place of the idolatry of the heathen, and the ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation; and they must observe, according to his institution, the ordinances which he hath established in his church. We apply the word ordinances or sacraments to baptism and the Lord's Supper; the first, a rite borrowed from the Jewish custom of plunging into water the proselytes from heathenism to the law of Moses, but consecrated by the words of Jesus, and the universal practice of his disciples, as the mode of admitting members into the Christian society; the second, a rite which originated in the affectionate leave which our Lord took of his disciples at the domestic feast that followed the celebration of the Jewish passover. The words of the institution, "As often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come," imply that the Lord's supper is, by the appointment of Christ, a perpetual ordinance in the Christian church, in which there is a thankful commemoration of the benefits purchased by his death; and the Scriptures lead us to entertain a very high conception of the spiritual effects of this ordinance with regard to those who partake of it worthily, by calling it "the communion of the body and the blood of Christ."† Baptism and the Lord's supper are the external badges of the Christian profession, the rites by which the author of the Gospel meant that the society which he was to found should be distinguished from every other. They are most apposite to the peculiar doctrines of his religion; there is a simplicity and significancy in them which accords with the whole character of the Gospel; and, as they were appointed by Jesus himself, no human authority is entitled to add to their number, or to make any material alteration upon the manner of their being observed.

Upon this account, we rank the right administration of Baptism and

* Rom. xiv. 17.

† 1 Cor. x. 16.

of the Lord's Supper, the preaching the "faith once delivered to the saints," and the maintenance of spiritual worship, as the marks of a Christian church. We gather all the three marks from the nature of such a society, and from several places of Scripture; and we find the three brought into one view in the description, given in the book of Acts, of the three thousand who were added to the number of the disciples by the sermon, which Peter preached ten days after the ascension of Jesus. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."*

The Church of Christ, separated from the rest of the world by these marks of distinction, is not set in opposition to human government. But the gospel, without entering into any discussion of the claims made by subjects and their rulers, enforces obedience by the example of Jesus and of his apostles, and by various precepts such as these, "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers." "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."† The ministers of this religion, although invested with a sacred character, and constituted by their master the spiritual rulers of that society, for whose good they labour, are not entitled to assume, in virtue of their office, any measure of civil power. They are not the arbiters between the parties who contend for dominion. But they co-operate with the authority of government, by their prayers, by their exhortations, and by the natural tendency of discourses composed upon the true principles of Christianity, to diffuse a general spirit of industry, sobriety, and order. Upon this account they have received, in every Christian country, the protection of the state; and in these happy lands where we live, the establishment of that form of Church government, which was supposed to be most agreeable to the inclinations of the people, is incorporated with the civil constitution. The ministers of the establishment have legal security for their livings. They have, in critical times, by their influence over public opinion, rendered very important services to their country; and, although that unwillingness to part with any portion of their property, which is felt by all the orders of the state, and which grows with the progress of luxury, may prevent any great augmentation of the moderate provision which is made for the ministers of our church, they cannot fail, while they discharge their duty, to continue to receive the countenance, the support, and the indulgence of the legislature.

* Acts ii. 41, 42.

† Matt. xxii. 21. Rom. xiii. 1. 1 Pet. ii. 13.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIANITY OF INFINITE IMPORTANCE.

OUT of the preceding view of the Scripture system, there arise some general observations upon which I wish to fix your attention, because I think they may be of use in preparing your minds for the more particular discussions upon which we are to enter.

The first observation respects the importance of Christianity.

This is a subject upon which, for the reason which I mentioned in the outset, I have hitherto hardly said any thing. The common method is, to place what is called the necessity of revelation before the evidences of it, and to argue from the necessity to the probability of its having been given. But I have always thought this an unfair and a presumptuous mode of arguing. It appears to me, that we are so little qualified to judge what is necessary, and so little entitled to build our expectation of heavenly gifts upon our own reasonings, that the only method becoming our distance, and our ignorance of the divine counsels, is first to establish the fact that a revelation has been given, and then to learn its importance by examining its contents. Agreeably to this method, I have led you through the principal evidences of the divine mission of Jesus ; I have given a general account of the system contained in those books, which his servants wrote by inspiration ; and I now mean to deduce from that account the importance of what the inspired books contain.

There are two views under which the importance of Christianity may be stated. We may consider the gospel as a republication of the religion of nature, or we may consider it as a method of saving sinners.

SECTION I.

WE may consider the religion of Jesus as a republication of the religion of nature. I have adopted this phrase, because, from the very respectable authority by which it has been used, as well as from its own significancy, it has become a fashionable phrase ; and yet there are two capital mistakes which the unguarded use of it may occasion. The first is an opinion, that Christianity is merely a republication of the religion of nature, containing nothing more than the doctrines and duties which may be investigated by the light of reason. But it follows clearly from the general view of the Scripture system,

that this is an imperfect and false account of Christianity ; because in that system there are doctrines concerning the Son and the Spirit, and their offices in the salvation of men, of which reason did not give any intimation ; and there are duties resulting from the interposition recorded in the gospel, which could not possibly exist till the knowledge of that interposition was communicated to man. The gospel then, professing to be more than a republication of the religion of nature, a view of its importance, proceeding upon the supposition that it is merely a republication, must be so lame as to do injustice to the system thus misrepresented.

The second mistake, which the unguarded use of this phrase may occasion, is an opinion that the religion of nature is essentially defective either in its constitution, or in the mode of its being promulgated, and that the imperfection originally adhering to it called for amendment. But this is an opinion which appears at first sight unreasonable. If the Creator intended man to be a religious creature, it is to be presumed that he endowed him in the beginning with the faculty of attaining such a knowledge of the divine nature as might be the foundation of religion. If he intended him to be a moral accountable creature, it is to be presumed that he furnished him with a rule of life. These presumptions are confirmed, when we proceed to examine the subject closely ; for we cannot analyze the human mind, without discovering that an impression of the Supreme Being is congenial to many of its natural sentiments. There is a strain of fair reasoning, by which we are conducted, from principles universally admitted, to some knowledge of the divine attributes. There are obligations implied in the dependence of a reasonable being upon his Creator. There is a certain line of conduct dictated by the constitution and the circumstances of man ; and there is a general expectation with regard to the future conduct of the divine government, created by that part of it which we behold, and corresponding to hopes and fears of which we cannot divest ourselves. All this makes up what we call natural religion. And it is manifestly supposed in Scripture ; for we read there, that “that which may be known of God is manifest among them : for God hath shown it to them ; for the invisible things of God are clearly seen ever since the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead : so they are without excuse, because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God.” We read that those who had no written law “are a law to themselves, their conscience bearing witness.”* And, through the whole of Scripture, there are appeals to those notions of God which are agreeable to right reason, and to that sense of right and wrong which is there considered as a part of the human constitution. Although, therefore, some zealous unwise friends of Christianity have thought of doing honour to revelation by depreciating natural religion, and although you will find that some sects of Christians have been led by their peculiar tenets to deny that man has naturally any knowledge of God, you will not suppose that all who use the phrase, Republication of the religion of nature, adopt these opinions, or even approach to them ; and you will find, that the

* See Macknight's translation of Rom. ii. 15 ; i. 18, 19, 20.

soundest and ablest divines consider natural religion as suited to the circumstances of man at the time of his creation. If you take the known history of the human race in conjunction with the principles of human nature, you will readily perceive that the opinion of these divines is well founded. There would undoubtedly be transmitted from the first man to his descendants a tradition of his coming into the world, and of his finding every thing there new ; and if you admit the truth of the Mosaic account, this tradition, by the long lives of the first inhabitants of the earth, would pass for many centuries through very few hands. It is to be presumed, too, even independently of the authority of Moses, that, in the infancy of the human race, there would be a more immediate intercourse between man and his Creator, than after the connections of society had been formed and established upon the earth. This tradition and this revelation might fix the attention of the posterity of the first man upon those suggestions and deductions of reason, which give some knowledge of the being, the attributes, and the moral government of God ; and there might be thus a foundation laid for the universal observance of some kind of worship as the expression of gratitude and trust. From a sense of dependence upon the Creator, there would arise the feeling of obligation to serve him, so that natural religion would come in aid of the dictates of conscience ; and the obedience which man yielded to the law of morality, while by the constitution of his nature it was rewarded with inward peace, would enable him, by his apprehension of a righteous Sovereign of the universe, to look forward with good hope to those future scenes of the divine government under which he might be permitted to exist. I do not say that this complete system of pure natural religion ever was established in any country merely by reasoning : but I do say, that all the parts of it may be referred to principles of reason ; that early tradition called and directed men to apply these principles to the subject of religion ; and that, had they been properly followed out, man would have been possessed, independently of any extraordinary revelation, of a ground of religion, and a rule of life, suited to the circumstances in which he was created.

Having guarded against the second mistake which I mentioned, by fixing in your minds this preliminary point, that the religion of nature was not originally defective, you proceed to consider what importance the Gospel derives from being a republication of that religion.

You will begin with observing it to be very conceivable that the whole system of natural religion may admit of being proved by reason, and yet that particular circumstances may have prevented that continued exercise of reason, by which the knowledge of it might have been attained. We often see men remaining, through their own fault or neglect, ignorant of many things which they might have known ; and the recency of many great discoveries is a proof how slowly the human mind advances to truth, although no one is so absurd as to infer, from the abounding of error, that truth is not agreeable to reason. If there was an early departure from the duties of natural religion, it is plain that this circumstance in the history of mankind would estrange them from that God whom they were conscious of disobeying, would weaken the original impression of that

law which they were breaking, and would overcast the hopes connected with the observance of it. The universal tradition of the creation might, for a few generations, in some measure counterbalance this tendency. But as men spread over the earth, the memory of the truths received from their first parents would become fainter; as their passions were excited by a multiplicity of new objects, the restraints to which they had submitted in a simpler state of society would lose their power, and a growing corruption of religion would accompany the progress of vice. This is the very account of the matter which the apostle Paul gives us. "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God, nor were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; and they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." These are the words of Paul in his Epistle to the Romans: and the best commentary upon them is the religious history of the heathen world. You need not look to those savage tribes, where the faculties of the human mind, depressed by unfavourable circumstances, have a very limited range, and man appears raised but a few degrees above the beasts with whom he associates. Recollect the polished and learned nations, whose philosophy we study, and to whose writings every scholar feels and owns his obligations; and in their religious history you will find abundant confirmation of the words of St. Paul. Although reason was there highly cultivated: although art and science made distinguished progress; although the public establishments of religion were magnificent and expensive, yet the fathers of science, in respect of religious knowledge were as children, "and the world by wisdom knew not God." There was a darkness with regard to the nature of God. The knowledge of one supreme Being, the Creator and Ruler of all things, the rewarder of those who seek him, the friend and protector of the good, and the avenger of the wicked, this most valuable knowledge was lost in the belief of a multiplicity of gods, who had the passions, the vices, the contentions of men, whose character and conduct, instead of administering comfort in distress, and strength under temptation, sunk the afflicted in despair, and corrupted the manners of the worshipper. There was a darkness with regard to the method of pleasing the gods. Multiplied sacrifices offered with much doubt, and with the fear of giving offence, a pageantry of costly ceremonies, a wearisome round of superstitious observances, made up the religion of the heathen, and excluded that worship in spirit and in truth, which it is the honour of a reasonable creature to offer to the Searcher of hearts. There was a darkness with regard to the duties of life. The voice of conscience was not only left without the support of true religion, but was in many instances perverted by corrupt systems. No scholar will deny, that the laws and the constitution of ancient states cherished certain public virtues which were both useful and splendid; and the names of many citizens will be celebrated as long as the world lasts, for heroism, the love of their country, disinterestedness, and generosity. But any person, who takes a near view of the manners of the great

body of the people in ancient times, finds that the established system of morality was loose and debauched ; for, although the state often required great exertions from the citizens for its own preservation, no restraint was imposed upon the indulgence of many evil passions, and the grossest vices were conceived to be consistent with pure virtue. There was still greater darkness with regard to the hopes of men. The impression of a future state is so congenial to the mind of man, that it could not be effaced. But the opinions generally entertained with regard to the future place of both the good and the bad were mixed with a number of childish fables, which exposed to ridicule, and even brought into suspicion, that important truth which they only obscured. The wise men who arose in different ages, although they did not implicitly adopt the vulgar errors, were not fitted to dispel this darkness. Some were led by the absurdity of the received creeds rashly to reject the fundamental articles of religion ; and that they might depart as far as possible from the superstition of their countrymen, they denied the being of a God, or they excluded him from the government of the world. Those who did not thus contradict the natural sentiments of the human mind were unable to divest themselves of an attachment to prevailing opinions and universal practice ; and while their writings contain many traces of a rational system, they sacrificed in public to the gods of their country. Their writings and their discourses did enlighten the minds of their scholars. But these scholars were few. The great body of the people had neither leisure nor capacity to follow their investigations. But they saw that the practice of the philosophers did not, in any material respect, differ from their own. The authority of the wise, therefore, instead of correcting, confirmed the popular system, and that system, founded in ignorance of the true God, took deep root in the minds of men, and was established by law, by example, and by custom.

I need not dwell longer upon this picture of the religious state of the heathen world. You find it drawn at full length in the books which are commonly read upon this subject, particularly in Clarke's *Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion*, in Leland's *Advantages of the Christian Revelation*, and in the first volume of Bishop Sherlock's *Discourses*. But even from the slight sketch that has now been given, it is manifest that there is a very great difference between the system of natural religion, which we are able to deduce from principles of reason, and the forms of religion which obtained in the most enlightened nations. It is true that the land of Judea enjoyed, from very early times, a revelation of one God. The Maker of heaven and earth was worshipped in that country for many ages without the mixture of idolatry, and a system of pure morality was contained in the books that were read in the Jewish synagogue. But the revelation which distinguished this narrow district was not intended, and was not fitted, to be the light of the world. At the time of our Saviour's birth, it was obscured by tradition ; and the law given to the children of Israel, instead of being able to correct the prevailing superstition, stood in need of a more spiritual interpretation than it received from the Jewish doctors. But whatever was the measure of light which the Jews enjoyed, it extended in very scanty uncertain portions to other nations, and they were, as the apostle speaks, "without God,

and without hope in the world," till the pure system of natural religion which they had lost was republished in the gospel.

It appears, then, from the religious history of the world, that a republication of the religion of nature was most desirable. And when you attend to the gospel, you will find that it not only contains the knowledge which was lost, but is peculiarly fitted by its character to give such a republication as the circumstances that have been stated seem to require. Those notions of the being, the attributes, and the government of God, which, as soon as they are proposed, appear most agreeable to right reason, are delivered by a teacher who was sent from heaven to declare God to man. That law, which the Almighty wrote in the beginning upon the human heart, is taught by authority as the will of our Creator; and the hope of future recompense is established by his promise. The manifest signatures of a divine interposition, which attended the introduction of the gospel, rouse the attention of the world to the system there republished; the form in which that system is delivered renders it level to the capacities of every one; and the institutions of the gospel perpetuate the instruction which it conveys.

It is particularly to be remarked upon this subject, that the simplicity which distinguishes the gospel, corresponds in the most admirable manner to its character, as a republication of the religion of nature. The ancient philosophers were accustomed to exercise their reason in profound and subtle disquisitions, and valued any system according to the depth and acuteness of thought which it discovered. There are many points respecting the nature of the soul, the manner of its existence, and its operations, which they had investigated with much care, and which, after all their research, they found involved in much darkness. But such speculations, however agreeable an amusement they afford to a thinking mind, form no part of natural religion; and accordingly they do not enter into the republication of it. There is not in the gospel any delineation of the nature and properties of spiritual substances, or any solution of those questions about which the ancient schools were divided. All abstruse points are left just where they were; and the important practical truths, in which the learned and the unlearned are equally concerned, are rested not upon long deductions of reasoning, which the great body of the people find themselves incapable of following, but upon an authority which they are at no loss to apprehend, the simple assertion of men who bring with them the most satisfying evidence that they speak the truth.

The order and precision of a philosophical system might have pleased the learned. But had the gospel condescended, in this respect, to assimilate itself to works of human genius, it would have borne on its face this manifest inconsistency, that while it professed to teach doctrines of equal importance to all, it taught them in a manner which few only could understand. That it might be of universal use, and might truly supply what was wanting, it came at first "not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom," but with great plainness of words, accompanied with the demonstration of the Spirit. The book in which this republication is handed down, from the historical form of some parts, and the familiar epistolary style of others, imprints itself

deeply upon every understanding, mingles itself readily with the habits and modes of thinking of ordinary men, and is retained in the memory, so as to be easily applied upon every occasion. Those who are not accustomed to form general views, to connect in their minds the parts of a whole, or to act systematically, carry away from the reading of this book detached sentences and precepts, which minister to their comfort and improvement : and even when their quotations discover narrow or mistaken notions of theology, their hearts are made better by the facility with which the quotations occur.

To all this there must be added that popular and familiar mode of instruction, which the institutions of the gospel furnish. The crowd of worshippers, who assembled in a heathen temple to behold a splendid sacrifice, retired without any rational conceptions of the Supreme Being. No attempt was made to connect the ordinary services of religion with the information of the great body of the people, and lessons of morality were confined to the schools of the philosophers. But all who live in a Christian country enjoy, by the republication of natural religion, a standing kind of admonition, with which the world was unacquainted in former ages. Those truths and those duties which are intimately connected with the happiness of society as well as with the eternal interests of man, are placed before them in a language which every one that is willing to hear may understand. Persons, who feel themselves unequal in every other respect, are admitted to receive the same benefit and consolation. The ignorant are enlightened, and the careless are put in remembrance.

And thus, as we formerly found that the system of natural religion contained in the books of the New Testament is infinitely more perfect than any that had been published before, as we found also that the growing improvement of those that have been published since cannot reasonably be ascribed to any other cause than to the benefit which they derived from this republication, so to the same cause we may ascribe the universal diffusion of the principles of natural religion in every Christian country. The public establishment of Christianity is a standing memorial, a perpetual remembrancer of the fundamental truths of religion, and the great duties of life. It has given the vulgar in our days more sound and enlarged conceptions of the nature and government of God, of the extent of our obligations and our hopes, than almost any philosopher in ancient times was able to attain ; and it is not easy to find any words, which so perfectly express the difference between the heathen world and those countries where Christianity is professed in simplicity and purity, as the words by which Jeremiah foretold the change. "After those days," saith the Lord, "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts : And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord ; for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them."*

The sum of what has been said upon the first view of the importance of Christianity is this. The gospel is a republication of the religion of nature, imparting that knowledge upon this subject, which

* Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.

is agreeable to the deductions of the most enlightened reason, but which unfavourable circumstances had prevented any man from attaining by means of reason, removing those errors to which no other method of instruction had applied any effectual remedy, and diffusing by its institutions, to men of every condition, the information, the instruction, and the comfort which it conveys. If knowledge be better than ignorance, if, of all kinds of knowledge, an acquaintance with the principles of true religion contribute the largest share to the consolation and improvement of human life; and if this most valuable knowledge be now rendered accessible, extensive, and permanent,—Christianity, which has accomplished so happy a change by republishing the religion of nature, is in this view most important. It deserves to be received with thankfulness, to be cherished with care, to be honoured and encouraged by every friend of mankind. He, whose discourse or example recommends Christianity to others, contributes by so doing to preserve and to spread the light that is in the world. He, who employs any means to depreciate the public establishment of Christianity, does so far contribute to extinguish that light, and to bring back those times of heathen darkness, from which this republication of natural religion hath rescued a great part of the human race.

SECTION II.

THE general account of the Scripture system presented Christianity to us as a remedy for the depravity which has pervaded the human race. I am now to illustrate its importance considered in this view.

Although the religion of nature be liable to be obscured by the general practice of vice, yet if it were fitted by its original constitution to be the religion of a sinner, nothing more than a republication would at any time be required, in order to render it suitable to the circumstances of man. But even after the religion of nature has been restored in its original purity, the provision made by it for the comfort, the direction, and the hope of man, is inadequate to the new situation in which he is placed, by being a sinner. In this new situation, the deformity, the weakness, the depravity of mind, which belong to sin, enter into his condition; he is also a transgressor of the divine law, and as such is liable to the consequences of transgression. But religion cannot exist in such a situation, without the knowledge of some method of obtaining pardon. For the expression which you read in the 130th Psalm, is strictly accurate. “If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared;” *i. e.* there can be no fear of God, no religion to a sinner, unless there be forgiveness with God: and, therefore, the first thing to be considered in judging of the importance of Christianity under this second view is, What are the hopes of forgiveness in the religion of nature? From whence are these hopes derived?

It is manifest, that the hopes of forgiveness are not necessarily connected with that law which the religion of nature delivers. A law

enjoins obedience, promises reward, it may be, to those who obey, and always denounces punishment against those who disobey. It would destroy itself, if it were delivered in these terms: You are commanded to obey, but you shall be forgiven although you transgress. The hopes of forgiveness, then, are to be sought in some part of the religion of nature distinct from the law. But it is not pretended that the religion of nature contains any specific promise of forgiveness, the record of which may be pleaded by transgressors as a bar to the full execution of the sanctions of the law. It is not possible to show the place where such a record is to be found. And therefore there is no source from which the hopes of forgiveness can be drawn under the religion of nature, but those general notions of the compassion of God, from which it may appear probable that he will accept of the repentance of a sinner, and reinstate in his favour those who have offended him, when they return to their duty. It is admitted, by all who have just notions of the divine character, that the same process of reasoning, which conducts us to the knowledge of the being of God, establishes in our minds a belief of his goodness. It is natural to think, that the goodness of the Supreme Being, when exercised to frail fallible creatures, will assume the form of compassion or long suffering. We see, in the course of his Providence, various instances of a delay or mitigation of punishment; and there are many appearances, which clearly indicate that we live under a merciful constitution. But we are by no means warranted from them to draw this general conclusion, that all who repent will finally be forgiven under the Divine government. You will be satisfied that this conclusion goes very far beyond the premises, if you attend to the following circumstances. The same process of reasoning which leads us to the belief of the goodness of God, ascertains also his holiness, his wisdom, and his justice, all of which seem to require the punishment of sinners. It is true those perfections, of which our conceptions lead us to speak as separate from one another, unite in the Deity with entire harmony to form one purpose, and that there never can be any opposition among them in the Divine mind, or in the execution of the Divine counsels. But it is impossible for us to say how far any particular exercise of justice or of goodness is consistent with this harmony; and it is manifest that every reasoning, which proceeds upon a partial view of the divine character, must be insecure. Further, we are not acquainted with the relations which subsist amongst the parts of the universe. But, we can suppose that reasons of the divine conduct, inexplicable to us, may arise from these relations; and even in that part of the universe which is most open to our observation, although we cannot always account for the limitations of the divine goodness, we can mark instances where the long suffering of God seems to be exhausted, where repentance ceases to be of any avail, and men are left to endure, without alleviation, all the evils which they had incurred by transgression. It is possible, that instances of this kind, which are very numerous, may be mingled with the examples of compassion in the Divine government to guard us against the conclusion which repeated compassion might seem to warrant, to give us warning that the time for repentance has an end, and that, in the final issue of the system in which we are placed, the obstinate transgressors

of divine law shall bear without remedy the full weight of that punishment which they deserve.

But even although there were not so many analogies in nature, conspiring to show that repentance is not always efficacious, the bare impossibility of demonstrating, from any known principles, that every penitent shall be forgiven, is sufficient to evince the infinite importance of Christianity. If the religion of nature, with all those intimations of the divine goodness, which are the ground of trust and hope to those who obey, does not give a positive assurance that it is consistent with the nature and government of God to forgive all who transgress, then it is plain that the new situation, into which men are brought by being sinners, renders a promise of pardon most desirable to them, because without this special declaration of the divine will, their religion must rest upon a very precarious foundation; and therefore the Gospel, whose peculiar character it is to contain such a declaration, which publishes the forgiveness of sins through the blood of him, by whom all that believe are justified, and have peace with God, deserves the name of *εὐαγγέλιον*, good tidings, better than any other message which the world ever heard, and is in truth the best gift which heaven could bestow. It is further to be observed, that while the religion of nature leaves the reason of a sinner to struggle with his passions, and does not revive his soul, under the experience of his weakness, by the assurance of his receiving any assistance in the conflict, the Gospel contains a promise of grace as well as of pardon. It confirms the law of his mind by those influences of the Spirit, which we stated as perfectly consistent with the reasonable nature of man, and while it publishes the remission of sins that are past, places him in circumstances so favourable to his moral improvement as may prevent a repetition of sins. That progress in virtue, which the grace of the Gospel forms, is connected with the hope of a reward which is infinitely more precious than the most exalted creature of God can claim as a recompence due to his obedience, but which, having been purchased by the death of Christ, is reserved in heaven to crown the feeble divided services of a degenerate race, and the security of which is so completely incorporated with the whole constitution of the law, that no doubt of this unmerited gift being at length conferred can remain in the breasts of those who live under the power of the Christian religion.

From the circumstances that have been mentioned, you may mark the precise difference between the religion of nature and the religion of Christ. The former has no original defect. When properly understood, *i. e.* when conclusions are fairly and fully drawn from premises which the light of reason may discover, it includes the most exalted views of the perfections of God, and of his moral government, and a complete delineation of the duties of man as a creature of God, an individual, and a member of society. But being, by its constitution, the religion of those who perform their duty, it holds forth only general doubtful grounds of hope to those who transgress. The gospel, on the other hand, having been revealed after transgression was introduced, and professing to be the religion of sinners, makes an adequate provision for the new situation of man. It is this difference which constitutes the infinite importance of Christianity. A

remedy is there offered for that state of depravity which is acknowledged to be universal. The remedy is complete in its nature. But it is not of use to those by whom it is rejected. In what degree its efficacy may extend to those who never heard of it, we have no warrant to say. But it is most reasonable, that those, who refuse the remedy when it is offered to them, should remain under the disease. The disease was not created by the gospel; it existed before-hand, and unless it be removed, the natural effects of it must be felt. The Scripture, therefore, says, that "he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him,"* *i. e.* the sentence of condemnation, which his sins deserve, retains its force. And he cannot surely complain, if when he despises the deliverance which the gospel brings, he continues in the same state in which the whole world would have been, if there had been no gospel.

Hitherto we have deduced the importance of Christianity from its suitableness to the present circumstances of man, from the value of the blessings which are peculiar to this religion, and from this plain position, that a rejection of it necessarily implies a forfeiture of its peculiar blessings. But we have not yet exhausted the subject, and there remain some awful views of the importance of Christianity, which imply that the rejection of it is not only a forfeiture of blessings, but is attended with a high degree of positive guilt.

In order to enter into these views, you will recollect, from the general account of the Scripture system, that the manner in which the assurance of pardon is conveyed by the gospel discloses to us the Son and the Spirit of God, two persons, of whose existence the light of nature had not given any intimation, but who, by their active interposition in our behalf, claim the reverence and gratitude of all to whom that interposition is made known. The sentiments, which it becomes us to entertain towards any person, correspond to the knowledge that we have of his character and his exertions. And therefore as the first duties of natural religion respect the God and Father of all, who is made known to us by his works, so there are duties resulting immediately from that knowledge of the Son and the Spirit which is communicated by the gospel; and a failure in these duties is as truly a breach of morality as any transgression of the law of nature.

It may be said, indeed, that these duties are binding only upon those who study the revelation of the gospel, and that if any person willingly remains ignorant of the peculiar nature of that interposition which it records, he is not answerable for neglecting the duties created by that interposition. But it will readily occur to you, in answer to this objection, that a reasonable creature is as much bound to make himself acquainted with the extent of his duty, as to perform it after it is known: and you will find that the plea, drawn from wilful ignorance or unbelief to excuse the neglect of the peculiar duties of the gospel, is diametrically opposite to the declarations of Scripture. We read there, that "he that believeth not is condemned," for this very reason, "because he hath not believed on the name of the Son of God."† His unbelief is the cause of his condemnation. The

* John iii. 36.

† John iii. 18.

enemies of Christianity have formed, out of such declarations, a very heavy charge against our religion. They say that the gospel means to threaten men into a belief of its doctrines, and that the manner in which we are now stating the importance of Christianity is calculated to supply the defect of evidence by working upon the principle of fear, and to force assent in spite of reason. We admit that if this charge were true, the gospel would indeed be unworthy of God, and unworthy of man. We admit that authority never can supply the place of truth, and that not even the immediate prospect of danger can compel a reasonable creature to yield his assent without sufficient evidence. But, at the same time, we assert, that it is often incumbent upon a reasonable creature to exercise his reason, and that he may deserve punishment for refusing his assent when sufficient evidence is offered him. In common life, we meet with many instances where men bring calamities upon themselves and their families, by not believing what they would have believed, if they had bestowed proper attention. It is therefore no new doctrine, and it is perfectly analogous to the ordinary procedure of the Divine government, that men should suffer for unbelief; and in the case of the gospel, there are circumstances which render unbelief, in a peculiar degree, criminal. The gospel contains the strongest call which a reasonable creature can receive, to exercise his reason in judging of evidence. It professes to be a message from God, the author of human nature, affording man that assistance in recovering the dignity and happiness of his nature, of which he is conscious that he stands in need. The person, who delivered this gracious and seasonable message, appealed to a series of prophecies meant to prepare the world for his coming, and to works of his own, far exceeding human power. Unlike the former servants of heaven, he called himself the Son of God; and he introduced his doctrine, not as a temporary institution, looking forward to something beyond itself, but as a complete, universal, and unchangeable religion. "Last of all," says Jesus, "he sent unto them his Son, saying, they will reverence my Son." We behold here every circumstance, which is fitted to rouse attention, and which can render inattention unpardonable. That the most exalted Spirit should refuse to listen to any thing which bore the name of a message from his Creator, were presumption. But, that a feeble imperfect creature, who is conscious that he has offended God, should precipitately reject a religion which brings the offers of mercy, were madness. It might be expected, that, even although he doubted of its truth, he would eagerly examine it, because, if it be true, it brings him the most joyful tidings, and, if it be true, to reject it is to reject the counsel of God against himself, and to exclude himself from all future hope of mercy. For you will notice, and it is an awful consideration which places the importance of Christianity in the strongest light, that, however men might flatter themselves, under the simple religion of nature, with general reasonings concerning divine mercy, the moment that a special revelation is published, promising the mercy of God upon certain terms, and disclosing a particular manner of dispensing pardon to those who repent, these general reasonings are at an end. If every one must admit that God knows better than we do, what is becoming his nature and consistent with his administration, it follows

undeniably that it is most presumptuous in those who acknowledge that pardon is necessary, to reject the particular method of dispensing pardon that is revealed, and yet still to build upon uncertain reasonings an expectation that it will be dispensed. If the words which Jesus uttered be true, the hopes of nature are included in the hopes of the gospel, and no hope is left to those who, neglecting the "great salvation spoken by the Lord," betake themselves to the religion of nature.

"This," then, "is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." It is supposed by your profession that you understand and acknowledge the infinite importance of Christianity considered in this view; and it will be your peculiar business to impress upon the minds of others a sense of that importance. For this purpose you must "be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you;" you must show, by your manner of defending Christianity, that you are not afraid of the light, and that you consider the evidences of Christianity as capable of bearing the narrowest scrutiny, and those whom you call to receive it as entitled to examine into the truth. But your chief difficulty will be to bring them to this examination with a fair unprejudiced mind. You will meet with many who ascribe to want of evidence, or to a peculiarity in their understanding, what does in fact proceed from an evil heart. You have to encounter that pride which refuses to submit to the righteousness of God, and those evil passions, which, because they do not expect to receive indulgence under the gospel, create a secret wish that it were false. If your labours, performed with good intention, with diligence, with prudence, and with ability, shall, through the blessing of God, overcome these obstacles, shall form in the minds of your hearers what our Lord calls a good and honest heart, and shall establish their faith upon a rational foundation, you will not only promote the welfare of society by teaching in the most effectual manner the great duties of morality, but you will be the instruments in the hand of God of saving the souls of men from death, and so carrying forward the great purpose for which this dispensation of grace was given.

I have chosen throughout this chapter to avoid a phrase which you often hear, the necessity of the Christian revelation, because that phrase, when unguardedly used, is apt to convey improper notions. It may be conceived to imply, that God was in justice bound to grant this revelation; whereas it should always be remembered, in theological discussions, that sinners have no claim to any thing, and that the gospel is a free gift proceeding from the unmerited grace of God, for the bestowing or withholding of which He is in no degree accountable to any of his creatures. The phrase, necessity of the Christian revelation, may also be conceived to imply, that it was impossible for God, in any other way, to save the world; whereas we have no principles that can enable us to judge what it is possible for God to do. We investigate, according to the measure of our understanding, the fitness of that which he has done. But there is an irreverence in our saying confidently, that infinite wisdom could not have devised other ways of accomplishing the same end. I have chosen rather to speak

of the desirableness and the importance of Christianity, which imply all that should be meant by the necessity of it, viz. that it republishes with clearness and authority the religion of nature ; that it gives the penitent that assurance of pardon which the religion of nature did not afford them ; that it brings along with it an indispensable obligation upon those to whom it is made known to examine its evidence : and that it leaves those who wantonly reject it to perish in their sins.

I have spoken of this subject with an earnestness and seriousness suited to its nature. You often hear it stated from the pulpit, and there are many printed sermons where it is fully illustrated. It enters into most of the books which treat of the evidences of Christianity. But it requires from you a particular study ; and when you have leisure to bestow close attention upon it, I would recommend to you to read the ablest book that ever was written against the importance of Christianity, I mean Tindal's book, entitled, *Christianity as old as the Creation*. The object of the book is to show, that the law given to man at his creation was complete ; that it is published in the most perfect manner ; that it does not admit of amendment ; and that the additions, which succeeding revelations profess to make to it, are a proof that these revelations are spurious. The positions of this book, then, if they be true, completely annihilate the importance of Christianity ; for they go thus far, to show that there is nothing in the gospel true, but what was from the beginning contained in the religion of nature, and published more universally, and with much less danger of error, by being written on the heart of man, than by being recorded in the books of the New Testament. I would not advise you to read this book, which is written with great art, without at the same time reading some of the answers to it. Leland, on the *Advantages of the Christian Revelation*, has given a full picture of the religious and moral state of the world, when the gospel was published, which demonstrates that there is much false colouring in Tindal's book. Foster also, the author of *Sermons and Discourses on Natural Religion*, has written against Tindal. But the most complete answer, which ought to be read by every student who reads Tindal, is Conybeare's *Defence of Revealed Religion*. There have been few abler divines than Bishop Conybeare. He had a clear logical understanding, and his talents were whetted and called forth by very formidable antagonists. He was contemporary with Lord Bolingbroke, whose numerous writings against Christianity are replete with false philosophy, malicious misrepresentations of facts, and keen satire. Lord Bolingbroke used to say, that it cost more trouble to demolish Conybeare's out-works, than to take the citadel of any of his other opponents ; an expression which implies, that this divine took always strong ground, and knew well where to rest his defence. Accordingly in his answer to Tindal's book, he has detected all its sophisms and equivocations : he has affixed a precise meaning to his words, and has shown, in a train of the most convincing and masterly reasoning, that that republication of the religion of nature, and that method of redemption, which the gospel contains, were most desirable ; and that these views of the importance of Christianity are not inconsistent with the original perfection which every sound theist ascribes to the law of nature. Bishop Conybeare's book is a complete illustration of the

importance of Christianity. But there are three other names which cannot be omitted at this time. Clarke, in his *Evidences*, has stated fully what is commonly called the necessity of revelation. In the first volume of *Sherlock's Discourses*, which is almost wholly occupied with this subject, you find those luminous views which distinguish the writings of that eminent prelate; and Bishop Butler, in the first chapter of the second part of his *Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion*, with rather less obscurity than is found in other chapters of that precious treatise, but with no less depth of thought, has stated, in a short compass, the importance of Christianity.

Leland on the Christian Revelation.

Foster on Natural Religion.

Conybeare's Defence of Revealed Religion.

Clarke's *Evidences*.

Sherlock's Discourses.

Butler's *Analogy*.

Paley's *Evidences*.

Brown against Tindal.

Halyburton on Deism.

CHAPTER IV.

DIFFICULTIES IN THE SCRIPTURE SYSTEM.

A SECOND general observation arising out of the short account of the Scripture system, is this, that we may expect to find in that system many things which we do not fully comprehend. Deistical writers urge this as an objection against the gospel. They say that it is the very character of revelation to make every thing plain, but that a system which contains mysteries, leaves us still in the dark, and therefore, that the mysteries with which the gospel abounds, are a convincing evidence that it did not proceed from the God of light and truth. The same word, mysteries, which generally enters into the statement of this objection, occurs often in the writings and the discourses of many pious Christians, who mean to speak of the gospel with the highest reverence. And yet, there is reason to think, that neither the former class of writers, nor the latter, have paid a proper attention to the Scripture use of the word. Upon this account, before I proceed to answer the objection by illustrating my second observation, I shall state the sense in which the Scriptures use the word mystery, and in so doing shall explain the reason why I choose to avoid that word upon this subject.

The ceremonies of the ancient heathen worship were of two kinds. Some were public, performed openly in the temple, before the great body of the people who were supposed to join in them. Others were private, performed in a retired place, often in the night, far from the view of the multitude; and they were never divulged to the crowd, but were communicated only to a few enlightened worshippers. The persons to whom these secret rites were made known, were said to be initiated; and the rites themselves were called *μυστήρια*. Every god had his secret as well as his open worship; and hence various mysteries are occasionally mentioned by ancient writers. "But," says Dr. Warburton, who has investigated this subject in his *Divine Legation of Moses*, "of all the mysteries, those which bore that name by way of eminence, the Eleusinian, celebrated at Athens in honour of Ceres, were by far the most renowned, and, in course of time, eclipsed, and almost swallowed up the rest. Hence Cicero, speaking of Eleusina, says, *ubi initiantur gentes orarum ultimæ*."* I have quoted this passage from Warburton, because it contains the reason why you seldom read of any other than the Eleusinian mysteries, although the word had originally a general acceptation. The theme of the word is *μύω*, *occludo*, from whence comes *μύειν*, in *sacris instituo*,

* Vol. ii. book ii. 4.

referring to the silence which the initiated were required to observe; and from *μυσ* comes *μυστηριον*, the amount of which may be considered as equivalent to *arcanum*. The writers of the New Testament have adopted this word, which was at that time well understood; and it is used by them in a variety of instances to denote that which God had purposed, but which was not known to men till he was pleased to reveal it. When the disciples of Jesus came to him, and said, "Why speakest thou to the people in parables?" his answer was, Matt. xiii. 11, "Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given," *i. e.* there are circumstances respecting the nature and the history of my religion, which I explain clearly to you my disciples by whom it is to be published, but which it is proper at present to convey to the people under the disguise of parables. You will not understand however, from these words, that there were always to continue, under the religion of Jesus, two kinds of instruction, one for the initiated, and one for the vulgar; for our Lord had said to these very disciples a little before, Matt. x. 26, 27, "There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed, and hid that shall not be known. What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light, and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the house tops." Accordingly, when the apostles came forth to execute their commission; the character under which they appeared is thus expressed by Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 1: "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God:" dispensers of that knowledge which was communicated to us first, for this very purpose, that we might be the instruments of conveying it to others. Paul calls the gospel, Col. i. 26,—"The mystery hid from ages and from generations, but now made manifest to his saints," hid from ages, because it was not investigated by reason, and must have remained for ever unknown, if it had not been declared by God in his word. The rejection of the Jewish nation, who had always considered themselves as the favourite people of heaven, is called a mystery, Rom. xi. 25, because it was very opposite to the opinions and expectations of men; and for the same reason, the calling of the heathen by the gospel to partake of all the privileges of the people of God is in many places styled a mystery. Ephes. iii. 3, 5, 6. I mention only one other instance, 1 Cor. xv. 51. The resurrection of the body is called a mystery, because, although many philosophers had speculated concerning the immortality of the soul, it had never entered into the minds of any that the body was to rise.

Dr. Campbell, in the first volume of his new translation of the gospels, has one dissertation upon the word mystery. He states that the leading sense of *μυστηριον*, in the Septuagint, the Apocrypha, and the New Testament, is *arcanum*, any thing not published to the world, though perhaps communicated to a select number. With his usual accurate and minute attention, he mentions another meaning very nearly related to the former, or more properly only a particular application of that general meaning. It is sometimes employed to denote the figurative sense, which is conveyed under any fable, parable, allegory, symbolical action, or dream. The reason of this application is obvious. "The literal meaning of a fable is open to the senses: the spiritual meaning requires penetration and reflection. and

is known only to the intelligent. In Rev. i. 20, and xvii. 7, John saw the figures, but he did not understand the meaning intended to be conveyed by them, till it was explained to him by the angel. To him it was *arcanum*. There is an allusion to this import of the word mystery in Mark iv. 11. "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables." The Eleusinian mysteries being accessible only to the initiated, the early Christians, to whom the language and the practice of the heathen were familiar, transferred to the Lord's Supper the word mysteries; because from that ordinance were excluded the catechumens, who had not yet been baptized, and the penitents, who had not yet been restored to the communion of the church. It was administered only to those who had been initiated by baptism; and from fear of persecution it was often administered in the night. On account of this secrecy, and the select number of communicants, strangers might apprehend a similarity between the Lord's Supper and the heathen mysteries; and from whomsoever this use of the word originated, the Christians might not be unwilling to retain it, as conveying, according to the language of the times, an exalted conception of their distinguishing rites.

It appears then, from this deduction, that there are three acceptations of the word *μυστηριον*. In the New Testament it is used to express that which God had purposed from the beginning, which was not known till he was pleased to reveal it, but which by the revelation was shown and made manifest. With early ecclesiastical writers, it means the solemn positive rites of our religion; and so, in the communion service of the church of England, the elements after consecration are called holy mysteries. In modern theological writings, and in the objections of the deists, mystery denotes that which is in its nature so dark and incomprehensible, that it cannot be understood after it is revealed. As this sense is really opposite to the sense in which the Scriptures use the word mystery, it appears to me advisable, both in discourses to the people, and in theological discussions, to choose other expressions for denoting that which cannot be comprehended.

But although, by avoiding an unscriptural use of a Scripture word, we may guard against the abuses and mistakes which the change of its meaning has probably occasioned, yet we readily admit that there are, in the Scripture system of the gospel, many points which we do not fully comprehend. And this is so far from being a solid objection to the gospel, that to every wise inquirer it appears to arise from the nature of that dispensation. In order to account for the difficulties which are found in the revelation made by the gospel, we may follow the same division which occurred when we were speaking of the importance of Christianity, and consider the gospel as a republication of the religion of nature, and as a method of saving sinners.

1. Even were the gospel nothing more than a republication of the religion of nature, we could not expect to find every thing in it plain; for we have experience that many points in natural religion, concerning the evidence of which we do not entertain any doubt, are to our understanding full of difficulties. We have very indistinct conceptions of the nature of spirits, or of the manner in which spirit acts

upon matter. The eternity and infinity of God are connected with all the intricate speculations concerning time and space. The origin of evil, under the government of a Being, whose wisdom and goodness are not restrained by any want of power, has perplexed the human mind ever since it began to reason; and liberty, the very essence of morality, appears to be affected by that dependence of a moral agent upon the influence of a superior Being, which is inseparable from the notion of his being a creature of God. Reason is unable to solve all the difficulties that have been started upon these points, yet she draws, from premises within her reach, this conclusion, that a Spirit who exists in all times and places exercises a moral government over free agents. Revelation has given assurance to this conclusion, has diffused the knowledge of it, and inculcates with authority the practical lessons which it implies. But revelation, far from professing to enter into the speculations connected with this conclusion, leaves man, with regard to many metaphysical questions that have no influence upon his virtue or happiness, in the same darkness which all the sages of antiquity experienced. A clear explication of these points, supposing it possible, might have afforded amusement to a few inquisitive minds. To the great body of mankind, for whose sake the religion of nature is republished in the gospel, it is insignificant, and would have only loaded a system whose simplicity is fitted to render it of universal use, with subtleties which the generality find neither interesting nor intelligible. Such an explication, then, would have been of little importance. I said, supposing it possible; for they who demand it, know not what they ask. Difficulties in any subject are merely relative to the understanding and opportunities of those who consider it. As a child cannot form any conception of the nature of the exertion which is made, or of the object which is proposed in many of the employments of men: as a man, whose mind has been untutored, or whose observation has been narrow, wonders at the discoveries of Astronomy, or the refined operations of art, and while he believes that both exist, is incapable of apprehending the principles upon which they proceed: so it is likely that we feel ourselves involved in an inextricable labyrinth upon questions, which superior orders of being can easily resolve. We inhabit a spot in the creation of God. We are placed in a system consisting of many parts, the relations and dependencies of which are beyond our observation; and our faculties in vain attempt to explore the intimate essence of those objects which are most familiar to us. There are measures of knowledge to which our condition is manifestly not suited. There is a degree of mental exertion of which we may be supposed incapable. "Now we see through a glass darkly;" and it is forgetting our condition and our character, to ask that every thing in nature should at present be made plain to our apprehension. If there be such a thing as Natural Religion, the comfort and improvement which it administers cannot imply a kind of illumination, which man is not qualified to receive. They must be compatible with the rank which he holds in the intellectual system, and they may leave him unacquainted with many parts of that system, the whole extent of which he is at present incapable of apprehending. It cannot, therefore, be stated as an objection to the gospel, that while, by

republishing the religion of nature, it restores that comfort and improvement in the most perfect manner, it keeps his knowledge confined within the limits suited to his condition. Other orders of spirits may clearly apprehend the nature of objects, and the solution of questions, to which his faculties are inadequate; because the knowledge of them is not, in any degree, necessary for his enjoyment of the portion, or his discharge of the duties, assigned him by his Creator.

2. If difficulties belong to the Gospel, as it is a republication of the religion of nature, we may expect to meet with more difficulties, when we consider it in its higher character, as the religion of sinners. By this character, the Gospel makes provision for a new situation, which had brought upon men evils, any remedy of which was not suggested by their knowledge of nature. We found that all those notions of the Divine character and government, which constitute natural religion, fail us in this new situation; and that the assurance of pardon rests upon an interposition of the Creator. What parts of the universe may be affected by that interposition we cannot say: and it is presumptuous to think, that all the branches and the ends of it may be fully comprehended by our understanding, since it is a subject confessedly farther beyond our reach than any part of nature. But if the revelation of the gospel leaves no doubt that the interposition has been made, and that the effects of it with regard to us are attained, this is all the knowledge that is of real importance upon the subject. Clear evidence of the fact is sufficient to revive our hopes; and although the manner in which the interposition is calculated to produce the effect had not been, in any measure, revealed to us, we should have been in no worse situation with regard to this fact than with regard to many others in nature, most important to our being and comfort, where we know that an effect exists, but have no apprehension of the kind of connexion between the effect and its cause. If this interposition involve the agency of other beings that are not made known to us by the light of nature, and if their agency be a ground of hope, or the principle of any duty, the revelation must inform us that they exist. But the knowledge of their existence and agency does not require an intimate acquaintance with their nature. There are in natural religion many intricate questions concerning the manner in which the Deity exists, that do not in the least affect the proof of his existence. The manner in which those beings exist, who are made known to us merely by revelation, may be still farther removed beyond the reach of our faculties. At any rate the knowledge of it is not necessary for the purposes of the revelation; and, therefore, although so very little be revealed concerning them, as to leave impenetrable darkness over all the speculations by which men attempt to investigate the manner in which they are distinguished from one another, and the manner in which they are united, still their existence and their agency may be placed beyond doubt by explicit declarations, and the reliance upon these declarations may establish, on the firmest grounds, that hope which the revelation was meant to convey.

The state of the case, then, with regard to the difficulties of religion, is precisely this. We have, by reason, the means of acquiring that knowledge which the original condition of our being required, but not

that which our curiosity may desire ; and accordingly when we launch into questions and speculations of mere curiosity, our pride is rebuked, and we are reminded that “ we are of yesterday, and know nothing.” The gospel, by the provision which it has made for the change in our original condition, has opened to us a state of things in many respects new, by which we perceive how very limited the range of our natural knowledge was. But this state of things is intimated, only in so far as the provision for our condition renders an intimation necessary ; and while all the facts of real importance to our comfort and hope are published with the most satisfying evidence, we are checked in our speculations concerning this new state of things, by the very scanty measure of light which is afforded us to guide them. This is a view of the extent of our knowledge not very flattering to our pride. But it may be favourable both to our happiness and to our improvement ; and if we are wise enough to cultivate the temper of mind which such a view is peculiarly calculated to form, we may derive much profit from the bounds which are set to our inquiries, as well as from the enlargement which is given to our hopes. There does arise, however, from this view of our knowledge, one most interesting and fundamental question, which is the subject of my third preliminary observation, What is the use of reason in matters of religion ?

Butler. Sherlock. Campbell.

CHAPTER V.

USE OF REASON IN RELIGION.

IF the Christian religion contain many points which we do not fully comprehend, and if we be required to believe these points, a difficulty seems to arise with regard to the boundaries between reason and faith. This is a subject upon which it is of very great importance to form distinct apprehensions, before we proceed to a particular consideration of the doctrines of Christianity. When you study church history, you will find that this question has been agitated in various forms from the beginning of Christianity to this day. It is not my province to relate the progress of this dispute, or the different appearances which it has assumed. And, in truth, many of the controversies to which it has given occasion are insignificant, because when they are examined they appear to be purely verbal. Those who said that reason was of no use in matters of religion, sometimes meant nothing more than that religion derived no benefit from that which is really the abuse of reason, false philosophy, and the jargon of metaphysics. The argument was kept up by the equivocation between reason and the abuse of reason; and had the disputants shown themselves willing to understand one another by defining the terms which they used, it would have appeared that there was very little difference in their opinions.

But this account will not apply to all the controversies that have turned upon this question. The sublime incomprehensible nature of some of the Christian doctrines has so completely subdued the understanding of many pious men, as to make them think it presumptuous to apply reason any how to the revelation of God; and the many instances in which the simplicity of truth has been corrupted by an alliance with philosophy, confirm them in the belief that it is safer, as well as more respectful, to resign their minds to devout impressions, than to exercise their understandings in any speculations upon sacred subjects. Enthusiasts and fanatics of all different names and sects agree in decriing the use of reason, because it is the very essence of fanaticism to substitute, in place of the sober deductions of reason, the extravagant fancies of a disordered imagination, and to consider these fancies as the immediate illumination of the Spirit of God. Insidious writers in the deistical controversy have pretended to adopt those sentiments of humility and reverence, which are inseparable from true Christians, and even that total subjection of reason to faith which characterises enthusiasts. A pamphlet was published about

the middle of the last century, that made a noise in its day, although it is now forgotten, entitled, *Christianity not Founded on Argument*, which, while to a careless reader it may seem to magnify the gospel, does in reality tend to undermine our faith, by separating it from a rational assent; and Mr. Hume, in the spirit of this pamphlet, concludes his *Essay on Miracles*, with calling those dangerous friends or disguised enemies to the Christian religion, who have undertaken to defend it by the principles of human reason. “Our most holy religion,” he says, with a disingenuity very unbecoming his respectable talents, “is founded on faith, not on reason,”—and “mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity.” The Church of Rome, in order to subject the minds of her votaries to her authority, has reprobated the use of reason in matters of religion. She has revived an ancient position, that things may be true in theology which are false in philosophy; and she has, in some instances, made the merit of faith to consist in the absurdity of that which was believed.

The extravagance of these positions has produced, since the Reformation, an opposite extreme. While those who deny the truth of revelation consider reason as in all respects a sufficient guide, the Socinians, who admit that a revelation has been made, employ reason as the supreme judge of its doctrines, and boldly strike out of their creed every article that is not altogether conformable to those notions which may be derived from the exercise of reason.

These controversies, concerning the use of reason in matters of religion, are disputes not about words, but about the essence of Christianity. They form a most interesting object of attention to a student in divinity, because they affect the whole course and direction of his studies; and yet, it appears to me that a few plain observations are sufficient to ascertain where the truth lies in this subject.

1. The first use of reason in matters of religion is to examine the evidences of revelation. For the more entire the submission which we consider as due to every thing that is revealed, we have the more need to be satisfied that any system which professes to be a divine revelation, does really come from God. It is plain from the review which we took of the evidences of Christianity, that very large provision is made for affording our minds a rational conviction of its divine original; and the style of argument, which pervades the discourses of our Lord, and the sermons and the writings of his apostles, is a continued call upon us to exercise our reason in judging of that provision. I need not quote particular passages; for that man must have read the gospels and the Acts of the apostles with a very careless or a very prejudiced eye, who does not feel the manner in which our religion was proposed by its divine author and his immediate disciples, to be a clear refutation of the position which I mentioned lately, that Christianity is not founded on argument. You will recollect, too, that all the different branches of the evidence of Christianity are ultimately resolvable into some principle of reason. The internal evidence of Christianity is only then perceived, when you try the system of the gospel by a standard which you are supposed to have derived from natural religion. The argument which miracles and prophecies afford is but an inference from the power, wisdom, and holiness of God, all of which you assume as premises that are not disputed; and

that complication of circumstances which constitutes the historical evidence for Christianity, derives its weight from those laws of probability which experience and reflection suggest as the guide of our judgment. It is not easy to conceive that a creature, who is accustomed to exercise his reason upon every other subject, should be required to lay it aside upon a subject so interesting as the evidences of religion; and it is plain, that to substitute as the ground of our faith certain impressions, the liveliness of which depends very much upon the state of the animal spirits, in place of the various exercises of reason which this subject calls forth, is to render that precarious and inexplicable which might rest upon sure principles, and to disregard the provision made by the author of our faith, who hath both commanded and enabled us to "be always ready to give an answer to every one that asketh a reason of the hope that is in us."

2. After the exercise of reason has established in our minds a firm belief that Christianity is of divine original, the second use of reason is to learn what are the truths revealed. As these truths are not in our days communicated to any by immediate inspiration, the knowledge of them is to be acquired only from books transmitted to us with satisfying evidence that they were written above seventeen hundred years ago, in a remote country, and a foreign language, under the direction of the Spirit of God. In order to attain the meaning of these books, we must study the language in which they were written, and we must study also the manners of the times, and the state of the countries in which the writers lived, because these are circumstances to which an original author is often alluding, and by which his phraseology is generally affected: we must lay together different passages in which the same word or phrase occurs, because without this labour we cannot ascertain its precise signification; and we must mark the difference of style and manner that characterizes different writers, because a right apprehension of their meaning often depends upon attention to this difference. All this supposes the application of grammar, history, geography, chronology, and criticism in matters of religion, *i. e.* it supposes that the reason of man had been previously exercised in pursuing these different branches of knowledge, and that our success in attaining the true sense of Scripture depends upon the diligence with which we avail ourselves of the progress that has been made in them. It is obvious that every Christian is not capable of making this application. But this is no argument against the use of reason of which we are now speaking. For they, who use translations and commentaries, only rely upon the reason of others, instead of exercising their own. The several branches of knowledge, which I mentioned, have been applied in every age by some persons for the benefit of others; and the progress in sacred criticism, which distinguishes the present times, is nothing else but the continued application, in elucidating the Scriptures, of reason enlightened by every kind of subsidiary knowledge, and very much improved in this kind of exercise, by the employment which the ancient classics have given it since the revival of letters.

As the use of reason thus leads us into the meaning of the single words and phrases of Scripture, so it is equally necessary to enable us to attain a comprehensive view of the whole system of Scripture

doctrine. Our Lord said to his apostles a little before his death, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now." The Spirit guided them into all truth after the ascension of their master; and their discourses and epistles are the fruit of that perfect teaching, which they had not been able to receive during his life. The epistles of Paul to the different churches refer to points which he had explained to the Christians when he was with them, or to questions which had risen amongst them after his departure. They mention rather incidentally than formally the great truths of the gospel: and there is no passage in them which can be considered as a complete delineation of all that we are called to believe. Yet the apostles speak of "the form of sound words," of "the truth as it is in Jesus," of "the faith once delivered to the saints," for which Christians ought to contend. The knowledge of this form of sound words, this truth and faith, we are left to attain by searching the Scriptures, by comparing the discourses of our Lord, and the writings of his apostles, by employing expressions which are plain to illustrate those which are obscure, by giving such interpretations of the sacred writers as will preserve their consistency with themselves and with one another, by marking the consequences which are fairly deducible from their explicit declaration, and by framing, out of what is said and what is implied in their writings, a system that shall appear to be fully warranted by their authority. Without all this, we do not learn the revelation which is contained in the gospel; and yet this implies some of the highest exercises of reason, sagacity, investigation, comparison, abstraction; and it is the most important service which sound philosophy can render to Christianity, that it enables us by these exercises to attain a distinct and enlarged apprehension of the gospel scheme in all its connexions and consequences. It is very true, that many pious Christians derive much consolation and improvement from the particular doctrines of Christianity, although the narrowness of their views, and the distraction of their thoughts, render it impossible for them to form a just and comprehensive view of the whole. But it is the professed object of those who propose to be teachers of Christianity to attain such a view. It is an object for which they are supposed to have leisure and opportunity: and unless they thus know the truth, they are not qualified to show that Christ is indeed "the power of God and the wisdom of God," or to defend the gospel scheme against the objections, and rescue it from the abuses, to which a partial consideration has often given occasion.

3. After the two uses of reason that have been illustrated, a third comes to be mentioned, which may be considered as compounded of both. Reason is of eminent use in repelling the attacks of the adversaries of Christianity.

When men of erudition, of philosophical acuteness, and of accomplished taste, direct their talents against our religion, the cause is very much hurt by an unskilful defender. He cannot unravel their sophistry; he does not perceive the amount and the effect of the concessions which he makes to them; he is bewildered by their quotations, and he is often led by their artifice upon dangerous ground. In all ages of the church there have been weak defenders of Christianity; and the only triumphs of the enemies of our religion have arisen from

their being able to expose the defects of those methods of defending the truth, which some of its advocates had unwarily chosen. A mind, trained to accurate philosophical views of the nature and the amount of evidence, enriched with historical knowledge, accustomed to throw out of a subject all that is minute and unrelated, to collect what is of importance within a short compass, and to form the comprehension of a whole, is the mind qualified to contend with the learning, the wit, and the sophistry of infidelity. Many such minds have appeared in this honourable controversy during the course of this and the last century; and the success has corresponded to the completeness of the furniture with which they engaged in the combat. The Christian doctrine has been vindicated by their masterly exposition from various misrepresentations; the arguments for its divine original have been placed in their true light; and the attempts to confound the miracles and prophecies, upon which Christianity rests its claim, with the delusions of imposture, have been effectually repelled. Christianity has, in this way, received the most important advantages from the attacks of its enemies; and it is not improbable that its doctrines would never have been so thoroughly cleared from all the corruptions and subtleties which had attached to them in the progress of ages, nor the evidences of its truths have been so accurately understood, nor its peculiar character been so perfectly discriminated, had not the zeal and abilities, which have been employed against it, called forth in its defence some of the most distinguished masters of reason. They brought into the service of Christianity the same weapons which had been drawn for her destruction, and, wielding them with confidence and skill in a good cause, became the successful champions of the truth.

I cannot speak of this third use of reason in matters of religion, without recommending to you an excellent book, in which you will find the advantage that Christianity has derived from it very fully illustrated. I mean *Dissertations on the genius and evidences of Christianity*, by Dr. Gerard, formerly Professor of Divinity in King's College, Aberdeen. All his works show Dr. Gerard to have been an acute distinguishing man. The observations in this book are very ingenious, and although there is in some of them an appearance of remoteness and research that is not perfectly agreeable, yet they are spread out at such length, and placed in so many different views, as to satisfy every reader not only that they are just, but that they add considerable weight to the collateral presumptive evidence of Christianity. The first part of the book is intended to show that the manner in which our Lord and his apostles proposed the evidences of Christianity was the most perfect. It is the second part which relates more directly to our present subject. Dr. Gerard entitled the second part, *Christianity confirmed by the opposition of Infidels*. He states the advantages which it derived from the opposition of early infidels, and then, with much useful reference to the present state of theological discussions, the advantages which it has derived from opposition in modern times, and the argument thence arising for its truth. The whole second part is the best illustration, that I can point out, of the use of reason in repelling the attacks of the adversaries of Christianity.

But while many of the champions of Christianity have adorned and illustrated that truth which they defended, you will find that others, by a licentious use of reason, have mutilated the Christian doctrine, and reduced it to little more than a system of morality. And therefore it becomes necessary to speak,

4. Of the fourth use of reason in judging of the truths of religion. The principles upon this subject are so simple and clear, that I shall be able to state them in a few words; and, although there has been very gross abuse of reason in judging of the truths of religion, it will not readily occur to you, how any person who understands the principles can fail essentially in the application of them. Every thing which is revealed by God comes to his creatures from so high an authority, that it may be rested in with perfect assurance as true. Nothing can be received by us as true which is contrary to the dictates of reason, because it is impossible for us to perceive at the same time the truth and the falsehood of a proposition. But many things are true which we do not fully comprehend, and many propositions, which appear incredible when they are first enunciated, are found, upon examination, such as our understanding can readily admit. These principles appear to me to embrace the whole of the subject, and they mark out the steps by which reason is to proceed in judging of the truths of religion. We first examine the evidences of revelation. If these satisfy our understandings, we are certain that there can be no contradiction between the doctrines of this true religion, and the dictates of right reason. If any such contradiction appear, there must be some mistake: by not making a proper use of our reason in the interpretation of the gospel, we suppose that it contains doctrines which it does not teach: or, we give the name of right reason to some narrow prejudices which deeper reflection and more enlarged knowledge will dissipate; or, we consider a proposition as implying a contradiction, when, in truth, it is only imperfectly understood. Here, as in every other case, mistakes are to be corrected by measuring back our steps. We must examine closely and impartially the meaning of those passages which appear to contain the doctrine: we must compare them with one another: we must endeavour to derive light from the general phraseology of Scripture and the analogy of faith; and we shall generally be able, in this way, to separate the doctrine from all those adventitious circumstances which give it the appearance of absurdity. If a doctrine, which, upon the closest examination, appears unquestionably to be taught in Scripture, still does not approve itself to our understanding, we must consider carefully what it is that prevents us from receiving it. There may be preconceived notions hastily taken up which that doctrine opposes; there may be pride of understanding that does not readily submit to the views which it communicates; or reason may need to be reminded, that we must expect to find in religion many things which we are not able to comprehend. One of the most important offices of reason is to recognise her own limits. She never can be moved by any authority to receive as true what she perceives to be absurd. But if she has formed a just estimate of the measure of human knowledge, she will not shelter her presumption in rejecting the truths of revelation under the pretence of contradictions that do not really exist; she

will readily admit that there may be in a subject some points which she knows, and others of which she is ignorant; she will not allow her ignorance of the latter to shake the evidence of the former; but will yield a firm assent to that which she does understand, without presuming to deny what is beyond her comprehension. And thus availing herself of all the light which she now has, she will wait in humble hope for the time when a larger measure shall be imparted.

The importance, and indeed the meaning, of the principles which I have stated, would be best understood by examples. But were I to attempt to exemplify them, I should anticipate the subjects upon which we are to enter. These principles will often recur in the progress of my Lectures upon the particular doctrines of Christianity; and therefore I shall content myself with having stated them in this general manner at present.

A right apprehension of this fourth use of reason in matters of religion constitutes the defence of Christianity against a large class of objections, that are often urged against some of its peculiar doctrines. You will find it therefore occasionally stated in all the writers who treat of these doctrines, and if there is a proper selection of your reading, just views upon this important subject will become familiar to your minds at the same time that you are studying the Scripture system. The best preparation for these views is sound logic, which, in teaching the right use of reason, ascertains its boundaries, and guards against the abuse of it. You bring that furniture with you when you enter upon the study of divinity. You improve it during the prosecution of that study, by reading Bacon, Locke, and Reid, and the other writers who treat of the intellectual powers, and by all those exercises, which render your own intellectual powers more sound and more acute, which increases their vigour, while they check their presumption. I would recommend to you particularly to read and study upon this subject, Reid's *Essay on the Intellectual Powers*, and five chapters of the 4th book of Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding*, which treat of assent, reason, faith and reason, enthusiasm, wrong assent and error. They contain a most rational, and I think, when properly understood, a just view of reason in judging of the truths of religion; and every student ought to be well acquainted with them.

Potter, *Prælectiones Theologicæ*, vol. iii.
Randolph.

CHAPTER VI.

CONTROVERSIES OCCASIONED BY THE SCRIPTURE SYSTEM.

THE last preliminary observation arising out of the general view of the Scripture system respects the controversies, to which that system has given occasion. Even those, who agreed as to the divine authority of the Christian religion, have differed very widely in their interpretation of its doctrines. These differences have not been confined to trifling matters, but have often touched upon points which are said to concern the very essence of the religion, and they, who held the opposite opinions, have discovered a mutual contempt and bitterness, very inconsistent with the spirit which might be supposed to animate the disciples of the same Master.

When we endeavour to account for the controversies in religion, we must begin with recollecting that there is hardly any subject of speculation, upon which those by whom it has been thoroughly canvassed have not differed in opinion. The degrees of understanding, and the opportunities of improvement are so various, and there is such variety in the circumstances and connexions which direct men to their first opinions, and which insensibly warp their judgment, that the same subject is seldom viewed by two persons exactly in the same light. Minuter shades of difference are generally overlooked by those who agree in important points. But there are opinions so far removed from one another, that no explication of terms, no concessions which either side can make in consistency with their own principle, are sufficient to reconcile them. Hence the different systems which have been framed, and zealously maintained with regard to several branches of natural theology and pneumatics, with regard to the principles of morality, with regard to politics, I do not mean the politics of the day, but the general science of politics, and with regard to various questions in natural philosophy. Any person, who is conversant with the writings of the ancient and modern philosophers, knows that without opposition of interest, merely from a difference in the mode of exercising the understanding upon subjects which appear to be within the reach of the human powers, controversies have been agitated ever since men began to speculate, and, after receiving the fullest discussion, have revived in a new form with fresh vigour.

But, notwithstanding this multiplicity of controversies, which the love of disputation has produced upon all other subjects, it may occur to you, that the authority, with which a messenger of heaven speaks, should put an end to all dispute with regard to the subjects of his mission, amongst those who acknowledge that he comes from God

You consider it as essential to a divine revelation, that all which is necessary to be known should there be delivered in explicit terms, and you think it impossible that any Christian should deny those propositions which are clearly contained in Scripture. A little attention, however, to the circumstances of the case, will enable you to reconcile the existence of theological controversy with these principles.

The different parts of my discourse upon this subject are, from their nature, so blended together, that I shall not attempt to keep them asunder by separate heads. But the points to which I am to call your attention, as serving to account for the multiplicity of theological controversies, are these—the manner in which the truths of the gospel are to be learned,—the nature and importance of these truths—the sentiments and passions, which, from the weakness of humanity, frequently operated in the breasts of persons who speculated concerning them—and the genius of that philosophy in which many of those persons were educated.

The truths of the gospel must be deduced from an interpretation of the words of Scripture; and this interpretation admits of variety, according to the measure in which those who profess to interpret are acquainted with the language, the manners, and the phraseology of the writers, according to the attention which they bestow, and the honesty of mind with which they receive the truth. In the plainest language that can be used, there are metaphorical expressions which some may stretch too far, and others may consider as not admitting of any direct application to the subject. In every discourse extending to a considerable length, there are limitations of general expressions arising out of the occasion upon which they are used, that may be overlooked, or that may be perverted; and with regard to the gospel in particular, there are pre-conceived opinions, which, by bending every proposition to a conformity with themselves, may lead men far from the truth, without their being conscious of showing any contempt to the authority of the revelation. These causes have operated even with regard to the meaning of the precepts of the gospel, and have produced that casuistical morality, which, while it acknowledges Scripture as the standard of practice, has abounded in controversies concerning the application of that standard to particular cases.

But the controversies, with which you are chiefly concerned, respect not so much the practical parts of our religion as its doctrines; and you will not be surprised at the multiplicity of these, when you recollect the imperfect measure in which the gospel has opened to the human mind new, interesting, and profound subjects of speculation. We found formerly, that, while the gospel brings the most convincing evidence of the great facts in natural theology, it leaves all the intricate questions which have occurred concerning these facts just where they were; and that, while by revealing a new dispensation of Providence it necessarily mentioned the existence of persons not known by the religion of nature, their relation to us, and the conduct of that scheme in which they are engaged for our benefit, it has communicated only such information, with regard to this new set of facts that are to be received upon the authority of revelation, as is of real importance, leaving many points in darkness. Here is the most fruitful

subject of controversy that can be conceived. The propositions revealed in Scripture are so few and simple, that it is hardly possible for those who rest in Scripture to disagree. But the pride of human wisdom does not readily submit to be confined within bounds so narrow. Those, who have been accustomed to speculate upon other subjects, continue their speculations upon religion, and, forgetting the proper province of reason with regard to truths that are revealed, which is to receive with humility what does not appear upon examination to be absurd, they reject as unimportant every thing that reason did not investigate; or they endeavour, by means of reason, to carry their explanations and discoveries far beyond the measure of light contained in the Scripture; or they embarrass, by the terms and distinctions of human science, subjects so imperfectly revealed as not to admit of them. It cannot be expected that there should be uniformity in employments such as these, which do not proceed upon certain principles, and do not admit of being reduced to any fixed rule. When men of different modes of education, and different habits of thinking, undervaluing the simplicity of the facts revealed in Scripture, and desirous to be wise above what is written, carry their inquiries into the manner of these facts, they set out from different points, they wander without a guide in a boundless field of conjecture, and, having assumed their premises at pleasure, they arrive at opposite conclusions.

Even in the days of the apostles, "the form of sound words" which they delivered was complicated, and disguised by the prejudices of those who embraced it. The Jewish converts, retaining an implicit veneration for the teachers of the law, wished to incorporate with the Christian faith all the fables which they found in the writings of their Rabbins; and many of the heathen converts proceeded to canvass the subjects of revelation, with the presumptuous and inquisitive spirit of the philosophy which they had learned. Hence you read in the Epistles of Paul of "foolish and unlearned questions which gender strife;" of teachers "who, concerning the truth had erred, and overthrew the faith of some;" of "fables and endless genealogies;" and of "oppositions of science, falsely so called." We learn from Peter that the unlearned and unstable wrested some things in Paul's Epistles that are hard to be understood, and the other Scriptures also, to their own destruction: and it is a tradition from the earliest Christian writers, that John wrote both his first Epistle and his gospel with a view to combat a heresy concerning our Lord's person, which attachment to the oriental philosophy had introduced amongst the first Christians. If controversy thus found a place in the church even under the eye of the apostles, and was not effectually repressed by their explanation of their own words, and by their authority, you may expect that it would multiply fast after their departure, when the only standard of faith was the written word, and no person was entitled to impose his interpretation of that word as the true mind of the apostles. The same presumptuous curiosity, which had appeared in the earliest times, continued to extend to all the parts of Christian doctrine. Men speculated concerning the manner in which the Son and the Spirit exist with the Father. Instead of judging of the evidences of the divine mission of Jesus, they proceeded to scan the reasons of that dis-

dispensation which they were required to believe. They investigated the principles upon which the several parts of the dispensation combine in producing the end, and they pretended to ascertain the nature and the manner of their operation. They spread out the scanty information which Scripture affords upon all these subjects into large systems. But the original materials being very few, and the rest being supplied by imagination and false philosophy, the systems differed widely from one another, and it was impossible to find any method of reconciling the difference.

You will not suppose that these discussions proceeded in every instance purely from a desire of attaining the truth, or that they were conducted with the calm disinterested spirit which becomes a lover of knowledge. Any person, who has that acquaintance with human nature which history and experience afford, will not be surprised to find that other passions often mingled their influence with the pride of reason. Jealousy of a rival produced opposition to his opinions, so that some systems of theology grew out of a private quarrel. The vices of an individual needed some shelter, and he tried to find it in the zeal and ingenuity with which he brought forward speculations upon some of the points that were then universally interesting. The love of power induced some to stand forth as the leaders in theological controversy, whilst meaner desires dictated to others the station which they were to assume, and the humble offices by which they were to maintain the combat. Matters of order, ceremonies of worship, and all those usages in Christian societies, which the word of God has left as matters of indifference to be regulated by human prudence, were laid hold of by artful men who knew that they were of no essential importance, and placed in such a light as to be the most effectual means of inflaming the minds of the multitude. Some of the earliest and most violent controversies respected the time of celebrating Easter; and the history of the church abounds with others equally insignificant. By this mixture of more ignoble principles with the presumptuous curiosity that pried into those "secret things which belong to the Lord," theological subjects became one field for exhibiting the angry passions, which from the beginning of the world have disturbed the peace of society. Had that field been wanting, men would have found other pretexts for acting, from jealousy, ambition, and avarice; and many of the controversies of the Christian church are, in one respect, a proof of that depravity of human nature, which, notwithstanding the remedy brought by the gospel, continued to operate in the breasts of those who professed to receive that religion.

The number and intricacy of theological controversies were very much increased by the philosophy of the times. In the second century the philosophy of Plato was held in the highest admiration, and some of the learned Christians, having been educated in the schools of the later Platonists, retained the sentiments, and even the dress of philosophers, after they became the disciples of Christ. In the third century, Origen, who by the extent of his erudition, the intenseness of his application, and the vigour of his genius, was qualified to lead the minds not of his contemporaries only, but of succeeding ages, was a professed Platonist. In his theological system, he accommo-

dates the whole scheme of Christian doctrine to the leading principles of Platonism; and in his interpretation of the Scriptures, he adopts that allegorical and mystical method of exposition, to which the luxuriant fancy, and the sublime imagery of the Athenian philosopher had given occasion, and the Platonic father was thus able to bring out of the simplicity of the Scriptures all the profound speculations which he wished to find there. Origen is generally regarded as the father of scholastic theology, which derives its name from applying the terms and distinctions of human science to the truths of revelation. Scholastic theology assumed different forms, corresponding to the succession of particular systems of philosophy. But during the whole period of its existence, it maintained this general character, that it altered and corrupted the divine simplicity of the gospel, and that by affecting metaphysical precision upon subjects which the Scriptures have left undefined, it was productive of endless controversies. The progress of these controversies, which rendered it necessary for the opposite parties to entrench their opinions behind definitions, divisions, and terms of art, recommended to theologians the philosophy of Aristotle. The subtle distinguishing genius of Aristotle had invented a language peculiarly fitted to convey the discriminating tenets of their systems, and his authority had introduced and established the syllogistical mode of reasoning, a mode of no avail in making discovery, but of singular use in disputation, because it furnishes a kind of defensive weapons, which, by keeping an opponent at a distance, may, when skilfully managed, render it impossible for him to gain a victory. For these reasons, as well as for others, which it is not my province to explain, the Platonic philosophy yielded after a few centuries to the Peripatetic. The authority of Aristotle became as complete in the schools of theology as in those of logic or metaphysics; and all theological systems abounded so much with the barbarous jargon then in use, that we cannot at this day understand the opinions which were held upon intricate points of divinity without attempting to learn it. Upon all subjects this language served to conceal ignorance under an ostentatious parade of words. But when it is applied to those subjects which the wisdom of God hath seen meet to reveal in very imperfect measure, the number of clear ideas bears so very small a proportion to the multitude of words, that the study of it forms a very unprofitable waste of time; for it requires much labour to apprehend the meaning, and, unless your mind be so unhappily constituted, as to remember words better than things, the meaning escapes almost as soon as it is attained.

Since the era of the Reformation, the Aristotelian philosophy has been gradually sinking in the public esteem; and the human mind, having broken the fetters in which she had long been bound, has freely canvassed all subjects connected with religion. While the ablest writers have appeared during the two last centuries in the deistical controversy, all the other controversies relating both to the doctrine, and to the rites or discipline of the Christian church, have called forth men of profound erudition and of philosophical minds. The same causes which we formerly mentioned, have produced in modern times a difference of opinion, both with regard to those intricate questions in natural theology which the gospel has not solved, and

with regard to those new points, concerning which the information given in Scripture is by no means satisfying to the curiosity of man. A more rational criticism, than that used in ancient times, has been applied to the interpretation of Scripture. A more enlightened philosophy, a sounder logic, and a language less technical, but not deficient in precision, have been employed in supporting the different theological opinions which former habits of thinking, or the interpretation of Scripture, have led men to adopt. The most controverted points have been the subject of public national disputes, as well as of private inquiry. Churches are discriminated from one another by the system upon those points which enters into their creed; and individual members of every church, with that boldness of inquiry of which the Reformation set the example, have carried their researches into many points which most creeds had left undefined. The consequence of this thorough examination of the Scripture system has been, not that all the parts of it are understood, but that the measure in which they can be understood is known; every unnecessary degree of obscurity which had been attached to them is removed, and the limits of reason in judging of religion, together with the proper method of its being applied to that subject, are ascertained. The opponents in these controversies have corrected the errors of one another. The appeals which have been constantly made to Scripture, the diligence with which all the passages relating to every subject have been collected, and the ingenuity with which they have been applied in support of different systems, enable an impartial inquirer to attain the true meaning; and a student of divinity must be very much wanting to himself, if, after all the labours of those who have gone before him, he does not acquire a distinct notion of the various opinions that have been entertained concerning the several parts of the Scripture system, and an apprehension of the train of argument by which every one of them is supported.

A review of the controversies forms a principal part of a course of theological lectures. We do not bring forward to the people all the variety of opinions which have been held by presumptuous inquirers, or superficial reasoners. To men who have not leisure to speculate upon religion, and who require the united force of all its doctrines to promote those practical purposes, which are of more essential importance than any other, it is much better to present "the form of sound words," as it was "once delivered to the saints," unembarrassed by human distinctions and oppositions of science, and to imprint upon their minds the consolation and "instruction in righteousness," which, when thus stated, it is well fitted to administer. This is the business of preaching. But this is not the only business of students in divinity. You are not masters of your profession, you are not qualified to defend the truth against the multiplicity of error, and your conceptions of the system of theology have not that enlargement and accuracy which they might have, unless you study the controverted points of divinity. It is true that there have been many disputes merely verbal; that there have been others that cannot be called verbal, the matter of which is wholly unimportant; and that perhaps all have been conducted with a degree of acrimony which the principles of Christian toleration, when thoroughly understood, will enable you to avoid.

These general remarks will find their proper place, after reviewing the particular controversies. But in that review you will meet with many which turn upon points so essential to the Christian faith, where the arguments upon both sides appear to have so much force, and have been urged in a manner so able, and so well fitted to enlighten the mind, that you will think it childish to affect to despise theological controversies in general, because there has been some impropriety in the manner of their being conducted, or because some of them are insignificant.

The time was when the decision of all theological controversies turned upon a kind of traditional authority. The writers in the first four centuries of the Christian church were supposed to be much better acquainted with the mind of the apostles, and to have been in a more favourable situation for knowing the truth upon all difficult questions, than those who apply to the study of theology in later times. They were dignified with the name of the fathers. Their opinions were resorted to with a kind of reverence, which is not due to any human compositions. They were considered as the only sure interpreters of Scripture; and such confidence was reposed in their interpretation, that their works were sometimes placed very nearly upon a level with the inspired writings. The charm of human authority was dispelled by the Reformation. An accurate enlightened criticism has appreciated the merit of the Christian fathers. We allow them all the credit, which is due to honest men attesting facts that came within their own knowledge. We venerate their antiquity; we prize that knowledge of the early rites of the Christian church, and of the tradition of doctrine from the days of the apostles, which can be derived only from them. Above all, we consider their writings as an inestimable treasure upon this account, that by their mention of the books of the New Testament, and by the quotations from Scripture with which they abound, they are to us the vouchers of the authenticity of the sacred books, and of the manner in which the canon of Scripture was completed. But our sense of their merit, and of their importance to the Christian faith in the character of historians, does not induce us to submit to them as teachers. Without any invidious detraction, with every indulgence which the manners of the times and the imperfections of other early writers demand for the Christian fathers, Protestants adhere to their leading principle, which is this, to consider the Scriptures as the only infallible rule of faith. They have learned to call no man their master, because one is their Master, even Christ: and in interpreting the words of Christ and his apostles, they consider themselves as no less entitled to judge for themselves, and as, in some respects, no less qualified to form a sound judgment, than those who, living in earlier times, had prejudices and disadvantages from which we may be exempt. I cannot express this principle better than in the words of our Confession of Faith: "The Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture."

This is the principle to be followed in that review of the great con-

troversies of religion, which forms a prominent subject of my lectures. I may often give you, from ancient writers, the history of opinions, and may occasionally combat those misrepresentations of that history which are found in modern authors, eager to call in every aid to support their particular systems. But I shall quote the Christian fathers as historians, not as authorities. I know no authority upon which you ought to rest in judging of the truth of any doctrine but the Scriptures, and therefore I consider sacred criticism as the most important branch of the study of theology. We are to avail ourselves of an intimate acquaintance with the language of the New Testament, *i. e.* with the meaning of single words, with the usual acceptation of phrases, and with the real amount of figurative expression. We are to study the general customs of the people amongst whom that language was used, and the habits of thinking which might dictate a particular phraseology to some writers. We are to investigate the mind of an author, by comparing his language in one place with that which occurs in another, and we are to endeavour to attain a full and precise conception of the whole doctrine of Scripture upon every point, by laying together those passages of Scripture in which it is stated under different views.

It is by this patient exercise of reason and criticism that a student of divinity is emancipated from all subjection to the opinions of men, and led most certainly into the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. It is the great object of my lectures, to assist you in this exercise, and I may hope, after having bestowed much pains in going before you, to be of some use in abridging your labour, by pointing out the shortest and most successful method of arriving at the conclusion. I shall not decline giving my opinion upon the passages which I quote, and the comparison of Scripture which I shall often make. But I do not desire you to pay more regard to my opinions than to those of any other writer, unless in so far as they appear to you upon examination to be well founded. You will derive more benefit from canvassing what I say than from imbibing all that I can teach; and the most useful lessons which you can learn from me are a habit of attention, a love of truth, and a spirit of inquiry.

CHAPTER VII.

ARRANGEMENT OF THE COURSE.

OUR Shorter Catechism, and our Confession of Faith, are formed upon the course in which systems of divinity commonly proceed, and both of them are clear and well digested. You will find another excellent abridgment of the ordinary course in *Marckii Medulla Theologiæ*, a duodecimo of three hundred pages, which used to be the text book in St. Mary's College, and which, in my opinion, ought to be read by every student of divinity, not early, but before he finishes his studies. You will see in this little book all the controversies that have been agitated. But you will see them in the order of the system, and the order is this. After a general account of the nature of theology, and of the Scriptures as the principle of theology, the following subjects succeed one another. God and the Trinity—the decrees of God—the execution of these decrees in the works of Creation—a view of the visible and invisible world—the Providence and government which God exercises over his works—man—the state of innocence—the fall—the consequences of sin—the covenant of grace—the person, offices, and state of the Mediator of the covenant—the benefits of the covenant—the duties of those who partake of the benefits—the sacraments—the Church—the final condition of mankind.

Upon all these subjects, the orthodox doctrine is stated, and the objections that have been made to the several parts of the doctrine are answered, so that every chapter contains an account of the several opinions, that have been held upon all the points that occur in the chapter. I was afraid to entangle myself in this course, partly from an apprehension, proceeding both upon the number of subjects which it embraces, and upon the experience of other professors of divinity who have engaged in it, that it was likely to stretch out to such a length, as to leave me no hope of finishing my lectures during the longest term of attendance which the law prescribes to students; and partly from an opinion that the arrangement adopted in the ordinary course is not the most perfect. You will not think this opinion ill founded, when you come to read *Marckii Medulla*; for there, and I believe, in every other of the common systems, there is so close an alliance between the subjects treated under the different heads, that the same principles are frequently resorted to in order to illustrate the orthodox doctrine; objections, the same in substance with those that had been answered in a former chapter, recur under a different form, and the same answers are repeated with only a little variation in the

manner of applying them. I am very far from condemning this arrangement as in all respects improper. It was adopted by very able men; it is most useful for giving a thorough acquaintance with all the parts of the Scripture system; and there is one book in which it appears to such advantage, that what I account its imperfection is almost forgotten, I mean Calvin's Institutes of the Christian religion: a book written in Latin, that is not only perspicuous, but elegant, and giving a most masterly comprehensive view of the great points in theology. It consists of four books. The first is entitled, *De Cognitione Dei Creatoris*. The second, *De Cognitione Dei Redemptoris*. The third, *De Modo Percipiendæ Christi gratiæ, et qui fructus inde nobis proveniant, et qui effectus consequantur*. The fourth, *De Externis Mediis ad Salutem*. It requires much time to read this book carefully; but when a student has leisure to make it his business, he will find his labour abundantly recompensed; and I do not know a more useful book for a clergyman in the country. It may be purchased for a trifle, and it is the best body of divinity. But excellent and profitable as this book is, the imperfection which I mentioned adheres to the plan upon which it is composed; and although the order of Calvin's Institutes appears to me simpler and more natural than that of any other system which I have read, yet I think that, if I were to attempt to follow it, I should be reminded by frequent repetitions, that a more perfect arrangement might have rendered the course shorter and less fatiguing.

This impression led me to attend to another arrangement of the controversies, which has been executed with much ability by some theological writers. Every controversy is stated by itself; *i. e.* all the distinguishing opinions of those, who derive a particular name from the peculiarity of their tenets, are brought into one view, and are referred to one general principle, so that you see the system of their creed, and can mark the connection between the several parts. To give an example: Socinianism is the system of those who hold the opinions of Socinus. The principle of Socinianism is, that man may be saved by that religion, which is founded upon the relation between God the Creator and man his creature. From this principle flow their opinions with regard to the intention of Christ's death as a witness to the truth, and an example to his followers, but not as an atonement for sin; their exclusion of mysteries from religion; and all those tenets by which they transform the Christian religion into the most perfect system of morality. The principle of Pelagianism, or of those who hold the opinions of Pelagius, is this, that the natural powers of man since the fall are sufficient to enable him to keep the law of God. From this principle flow the opinions of the Pelagians concerning original sin, the decrees of God, the influences of the Spirit, and the measure of perfection which may be attained upon earth.

This method of arranging the controversies is manifestly much more scientific than the former. In every set of opinions which deserves the name of a system, there are some leading principles which connect the several parts. It is an agreeable exercise of the understanding to trace these principles, and to mark that kind of unity and subordination which arises from their influence. It is an act of jus-

tice in those who examine the opinions of others, to take into view that mutual dependence which renders them a consistent whole; and it is an endless unavailing task to attempt to defend the truth against a multitude of detached errors, unless your reasoning reach the sources from which these errors proceed. I recommend it, therefore, to those students who, in the course of their reading, have attained an intimate acquaintance both with the evidences of Christianity and with the particular doctrines of our faith, to study the most important controversies in this scientific manner. You will derive much assistance in this branch of your researches from Mosheim's Church History, which is an invaluable treasure of theological knowledge. This most learned and ingenious author, who, when read along with the able and judicious notes of his translator Maclaine, is in almost every instance a safe guide, has given, in one division of his work, a summary of all the heresies or particular opinions that were held in the different ages of the church. He has traced their rise and their progress, and has discriminated, with critical acumen, those which appear to an ordinary eye almost the same. As his work, from its nature, makes mention of all the controversies, both those which are important and those which are trifling, you cannot expect that even the opinions upon which he has judged it proper to bestow the most particular attention, will be fully elucidated in a book which comprehends such an extent of time, and such a variety of matter. You will supply this unavoidable defect by the books which Mosheim quotes in his notes, or which I recommend: and from the general index which he furnishes, and the treatises which professedly explain the particular subjects, you will be able to form a distinct connected view of every one of the five controversies which are universally interesting, and which are commonly known by the names of Arianism, Pelagianism, Socinianism, Arminianism, and the Popish controversy. There are many other controversies that turn upon very important points. But they have not been so perfectly digested into the form of a system as the five now mentioned, nor have they been defended with such ability as to occupy a great part of the attention of a student.

Although I thus earnestly recommend attention to the scientific arrangement of the controversies, I have been restrained from adopting it as the plan of my course by the following reasons. Some of the five great controversies resemble one another in several points. Thus Pelagianism and Arminianism both turn upon the natural powers which man has, since the fall, to obey the will of God. Socinianism agrees with Pelagianism upon this point, and it agrees with Arianism in denying that Jesus is truly God, while it differs from Arianism in the account which it gives of his person. You may judge from this specimen, that although the scientific method, which I mentioned, is unquestionably the best for making you acquainted with any particular system of opinions, yet to us, who mean to review all the most important controverted points, it would necessarily be attended with much repetition. We should often meet, under different names, with the same objections, and the same heretical opinions, and we should be obliged to bring forward the same arguments and the same passages of Scripture in answer to them. Further, our object is not so much to know who held the particular opinions, and

what was the age in which they lived ; but what were the various opinions upon the great subjects of theology, and what were the grounds upon which they rested. We may attain this object, although we confound the shades of difference between systems that nearly approach, and therefore to us it were a needless waste of research and of time to discriminate them nicely. Further still, as every one of the five great controversies embraces particular opinions upon many different points, the arranging the five separately breaks the subjects of theology into parts, and does not afford a full united view of any one subject. You will understand what I mean from an example. Besides the opinions of the early ages concerning the person of Christ, one opinion was held in the third century by Arius, another at a much later period by Socinus, and a third has been the general doctrine of the Christian church. Any one who wishes to make himself master of this interesting subject will desire to see the different opinions brought together, that he may compare their probability, that he may judge of the support which every one of them receives from particular passages of Scripture, or from the analogy of faith, and may thus attain a conclusion which he can defend by good reasons. Had you a book continually by you, in which all the controversies were arranged singly, you might make a collation of the different opinions upon the same subject, by reading first a part of Arianism, then the corresponding part of Socinianism, and next the corresponding part of that system which is called Orthodox, in the same manner as you get a full view of a siege in the Peloponnesian war, by passing directly from the portion of the siege which is written in one book of the history of Thucydides, to the portion of the same siege which is written in another book. But you could not make this collation in hearing a course of lectures, unless I repeated under one controversy as much of what I had said under the corresponding part of another, as to bring it to your mind ; and this repetition would be a proof that the arrangement, however favourable to your understanding any one system of opinions, is unfavourable to your understanding the whole controverted subject.

Once more, there is in the different opinions upon the same subject a progress that may be traced, by which you see how one paved the way for the other ; and the succeeding opinion is often illustrated by the preparation which had been made for its reception. This advantage is lost, when you throw together the different subjects that were agitated in one system of opinions. You see, in this way, the chain which binds together all the parts of Pelagianism, Arminianism, or Socinianism. But in passing along the chain, you miss the thread which conducts you from the opinions on a particular subject found under one system, to the opinions on the same subject found under another.

For these reasons, I resolved neither to follow the path of the ordinary systems of theology, nor to adopt the more scientific mode of classing the opinions that distinguish different sects of Christians. The plan of my course is this :

Out of the mass of matter that is found in the system, I select the great subjects which have agitated and divided the minds of those who profess to build their faith upon the same Scriptures. I consider

every one of these subjects separately ; I present the whole train and progress of opinions that have been held concerning it ; and I state the grounds upon which they rest, passing slightly over those opinions which are now forgotten, or whose extravagance prevents any danger of their being revived, and dwelling upon those whose plausibility gave them at any time a general possession of the minds of men, or which still retain their influence and credit amongst some denominations of Christians.

In selecting the great subjects to be thus brought forward, I was guided by that general view of the Gospel which was formerly illustrated. We found its distinguishing character to be the religion of sinners,—a remedy for the present state of moral evil, provided by the love of God the Father, brought into the world by Jesus Christ, and applied by the influences of the Spirit. All the controversies which are scattered through the ordinary systems, and which have been classed under the different heads, Arianism, Pelagianism, Arminianism, and Socinianism, respect either the Persons by whom the remedy is brought and applied, or the remedy itself. The different opinions respecting the Persons comprehend the whole of the Arian, a part of the Socinian, and all that is commonly called the Trinitarian controversy, upon which so much has been written since the beginning of the last century. The different opinions concerning the remedy itself respect either the nature of the remedy, the extent of the remedy, or the application of it ; and they comprehend the whole system of Pelagian and Arminian principles, a part of the Socinian, and many of the doctrines of Popery. Opinions as to the nature of the remedy depend upon the apprehensions entertained of the nature of the disease ; so that all the questions concerning original sin, the demerit of sin, and the manner in which guilt can be expiated, fall under this head. Opinions as to the extent of the remedy embrace the questions concerning universal and particular redemption, and concerning the decrees of God. Opinions as to the application of the remedy turn upon the necessity of divine assistance, the manner in which it is bestowed and received, and the effects which it produces upon the mind and the conduct of those to whom it is given.

It appears to me, therefore, that by this distribution we do not omit any of the great controversies, with which students of divinity ought to be acquainted : at the same time, by tracing with undistracted attention the progress of opinions upon every subject, by viewing their points of opposition, and examining their respective merits, we consider one subject closely upon all sides before we proceed to another, and are thus saved the necessity of returning at any future period upon the ground which we had formerly trodden. Much light will probably be struck from this collision of different opinions. You have experience that you are never so thoroughly acquainted with a subject, as when you have heard the discussion of the several questions to which it gives rise, either in conversation, or in more formal debate ; and therefore you have reason to expect that your knowledge of theology will be rendered much more accurate and profound, by canvassing the different opinions held in a succession of ages by very able men, and defended by them with a zeal that cannot be supposed

to have omitted any argument, because it was dictated not merely by the love of truth, but in many instances by the desire of victory.

After I have derived all the benefit which the labours of these men can afford, in opening to you those doctrines of Christianity which are the great subject of your studies, I next consider the church of Christ as a society founded by its Author. This branch of our course entered into the general view of the Scripture system ; and it demands your particular attention, not only from the mention made of it in Scripture, but also from the many violent controversies to which it has given birth. The notion of a society implies the use of certain external observances, which are necessary to distinguish it from other societies, and to maintain order amongst the members. It is natural, therefore, in speaking of the Christian society, to give a history of church government, or an account of the various practices and questions which have occurred upon this head ; and in this account I am led to investigate the grounds of that claim advanced by the Bishop of Rome, as the head of the church, and the Vicar of Christ upon earth. There are many of the doctrines of the church of Rome, which fall under some of the controversies that we propose to review. But these doctrines were only called in as auxiliaries of the hierarchy, to lend their aid in supporting that system of spiritual power, of which the claim made by the Bishop of Rome was the principal pillar ; so that by much the greater part of the Popish controversy belongs to the head of church government.

It is impossible, in this country, to consider Church government without bestowing attention upon the claims of Episcopacy and Presbytery. After examining the support which they derive from the word of God, and from the practice of antiquity, the transition is natural to the constitution of that Church, of which you expect to become members. The Church of Scotland, like every other established Church, requires her office-bearers to subscribe a declaration of their faith. It is proper, therefore, to consider the right upon which such requisition rests, and the propriety of that right being exercised. The peculiar doctrines contained in that declaration, which we call the Confession of Faith, will have passed in review before we come to this part of our course. But it will be proper that you then attend to the reason of the peculiarities of that worship, in which you may soon be called to preside, and to the principles of that discipline and government, of which you may soon be called to be the guardians and the administrators.

The different parts of the office of a parish minister are familiar to those who live in this country, where they are not neglected. But some observations, with regard to the importance of performing them properly, and the manner in which they may be rendered most useful, will not appear unseasonable to those who are about to enter upon the office of the ministry ; and there is one branch of that office. I mean the preparation and the delivery of sermons, concerning which, after all that you have heard of composition elsewhere, you will naturally expect some practical rules in a place where your own discourses, the legal specimen of your proficiency in the study of theology, are exhibited and judged.

When I have filled up this plan to my own satisfaction, I shall think

that I discharge that part of the public duties of my station which consists in lecturing, by contributing the whole stock of my information and experience for your advantage. My principle is, to condense the execution of the plan as much as possible. I shall be disappointed, if I be not able to comprise my whole course in such a period as will give to every residing student of divinity an opportunity, if he chooses, of hearing all the parts of it; and I shall think it an advantage, if, by omitting some parts, and abridging others, I can so reduce the course, as to admit of passing over it twice, in the time prescribed for regular attendance at college.

Turretin, abridged by Russenius, is a very useful book for giving a short view of all the controverted points.

Stapferi Instit. Theol. Polemicæ, in 5 vols. is a valuable work. The different systems of opinions concerning the truths of religion are there separately arranged.

BOOK III.

OPINIONS CONCERNING THE SON, THE SPIRIT, AND THE MANNER OF THEIR BEING UNITED WITH THE FATHER.

THE Gospel reveals two persons, whose existence was not known by the light of nature ; the Son, by whom the remedy offered in the Gospel was brought into the world, and the Spirit, by whom it is applied. The revelation concerning the first of these persons is much more full than that concerning the second, and has given occasion to a greater variety of opinions. I shall begin therefore with stating the opinions concerning the Son ; I shall next give a short view of the opinions concerning the Spirit ; after which, there will remain a general subject, arising, as we shall find, out of the illustration of these separate branches ; and, in speaking of this, I shall have to state the opinions respecting the manner in which these two persons are united with the Father.

CHAPTER I.

OPINIONS CONCERNING THE PERSON OF THE SON.

IN entering upon the opinions concerning the person of the Son, I must warn you not to consider the subject as unimportant. It is the language of Dr. Priestley, that the value of the Gospel does not, in any degree, depend upon the idea which we may entertain concerning the person of Christ, because all that is truly interesting to us, is the object of his mission, and the authority with which his doctrine is promulgated. But this language is inconsistent with the general strain of the New Testament, a great part of which we shall find occupied in giving us just conceptions of the person of Christ : It is inconsistent with the general sentiments of the Christian Church, who have canvassed this subject with much diligence, and with deep interest, ever since the Gospel appeared : It is inconsistent with the zeal which Dr. Priestley and his associates have discovered in com-

municating their opinions upon this subject to the world; and it is inconsistent with the natural propensity to which the Scriptures have graciously accommodated themselves, and by which every one is led to connect the importance of a message with the dignity of the messenger. It does not become any one to suppose, that the discoveries made in the gospel concerning the person of Christ contain merely a popular argument, to which it is unnecessary for him to attend. But it becomes every person, who believes that the message proceeds from heaven, to receive with reverence the discoveries concerning the messenger, as conveying important truth, which claims the attention of every understanding to which it is made known, and creates duties which a Christian ought not to neglect.

With this impression of the importance of the subject, I proceed to analyse the opinions concerning the Person of Christ. I do not propose to follow the order of time, because there is some difficulty in ascertaining the dates of particular opinions, because the order in which they arose is not always very material, and because the frequent revival of old opinions in new systems would render a chronology of them full of repetitions. Neither do I propose to fatigue your attention with the useless uninteresting detail of all the extravagant conceits broached by particular men, or of the minute shades of difference among those who agreed in their general system. I shall furnish you with the information that is of real importance, by bringing forward the three great systems upon this subject. Their features are strongly marked and clearly discriminated, and they appear to comprehend all the variety of which the subject admits, because the several opinions which have at some times been exploded and at other times revived, are always reducible to one or other of these three systems.

The simplest opinion concerning the person of Christ is, that he was merely a man who had no existence before he was born of Mary; who was distinguished from the former messengers of heaven, not by any thing more sacred in his original character, but by the virtues of his life, and by the extraordinary powers with which, upon account of the peculiar importance of his commission, he was invested; who, after he had executed this commission with fidelity, with fortitude, and zeal, was rewarded for his obedience to God, his good-will to men, and his patience under suffering, by being raised from the dead, and exalted to the highest honour, being constituted at his resurrection the Lord of the creation, and entering at that time into a kingdom which is to continue to the end of the world, and the administration of which entitles him to reverence and submission from the human race. Some who held this general system admitted that Jesus was born in a miraculous manner of a virgin; while others contended that he was literally the son of Joseph and Mary. Some said that Jesus might be worshipped upon account of the dominion to which he is raised; while others, who allow that gratitude and honour are due to him, confine adoration to the Father. But these two differences do not affect the general principle of the system. In whatsoever manner Jesus came into the world, he is, according to this system, *ψηλος ανθρωπος*, a mere man; and whether reverence in general, or that particular expression of reverence that is

called adoration, be considered as due to him, it is not upon account of any essential property of his nature, but upon account of a dominion that was given him by God.

The grounds upon which this opinion rests, are the general strain of the prophecies of the Old Testament, in which Jesus is foretold as the seed of the woman; the general strain of the New Testament in which our Lord speaks of himself, and his apostles speak of him as a man; the accounts of his birth, his childhood, his sufferings, and his giving up the ghost; and the manner in which the Scriptures frequently state his glory as the recompense of what he did upon earth. The argument drawn from this language of Scripture is supported by general reasonings concerning the fitness of employing a man, whose life is a pattern which we may be supposed capable of imitating, and whose resurrection and exaltation furnish an encouragement, suited to the condition of those who encounter hardships the same in kind with those which he overcame: and this argument is defended by attempts to explain away such passages of Scripture, as seem to contradict the system, and particularly by referring every thing that is said of the glory of Christ to that power which was given him upon earth, or to that state of exaltation which he now holds in heaven.

It is said that this opinion was held in the first century by a small sect of Jewish converts, called the Ebionites, who received no other part of the canon of the New Testament but the Gospel according to Matthew, after rejecting the first two chapters. The opinion was openly taught by Theodotus and Artemon, about the end of the second century: and Eusebius says that Theodotus was the first who taught the simple humanity of Christ.* It may be traced also in other systems that divided the Christian church before the Council of Nice, which met in the beginning of the fourth century. But after that Council, this opinion appears to have been exploded till the time of the Reformation, when it was revived by Socinus, and propagated among his disciples, who abounded in Transylvania, Hungary, and Poland. It continues to form one of the leading characteristical features of those who are called Socinians. It was insinuated with modesty and diffidence by some eminent men in the course of the last century, amongst whom is Lardner, who has deserved so well of the Christian world by that laborious and valuable collection entitled the *Credibility of the Gospel History*. It has of late been published with zeal and confidence by Lindsey, Priestley, and their associates; and it is the avowed principle of those Socinians who choose to distinguish themselves by the title of Unitarians.

The second opinion concerning the person of Christ, is, that he was not a mere man, but that he existed before he appeared upon earth. It occurs to mention under this second opinion one branch of the tenets of the Gnostics, those heretics who began, even in the days of the apostles, to corrupt the simplicity of the gospel by a mixture of oriental philosophy. They held that the Christ was an emanation from the supreme mind, one of those beings whom they considered as filling the pleroma, and to whom they gave the name of *Æons*. This

* Eus. Hist. Ecc. lib. v.

glorious Æon, who was sent by the Supreme Being to the earth, according to some of the Gnostics, united himself to the man Jesus at his baptism, and left him at his crucifixion; according to others, he only assumed the appearance of a man; so that the body which the Jews saw, and which they thought they crucified, was a shadowy form that eluded their malice. Hence this latter class of Gnostics were called by the ancient fathers, Docetæ, from *δοξεω*, *videor*, as they ascribed a seeming, not a real body to Jesus. It were endless to follow all the differences of opinion concerning the person of Christ among those who held the Gnostic principles; because as the principles were merely the fruit of imagination, resting upon no solid ground either in reason or in revelation, they admitted of infinite variety. A sounder philosophy has exploded these abuses of fancy, and given human speculations a more useful direction, so that the whole system of Gnostic principles is now an object of study, only in so far as some acquaintance with it is necessary to throw light upon those parts of the sacred writings in which it is attacked. Mosheim has delineated that system in his Church History with great ingenuity and learning, with more minuteness in some instances, than it appears to deserve, and with as much precision and clearness as its obscure airy form admitted. You will learn from him all that needs to be known upon this subject; and you will find that almost all the Gnostic sects considered Jesus as dignified and animated by some kind of union with a celestial Æon, who had existed in the *pleroma* before he descended to earth.*

It is of more importance to fix your attention upon the substantial definite form which the second opinion concerning the person of Christ, I mean that which raised him above man by ascribing to him pre-existence, assumed in the system of Arius. It was the leading principle of this system, that the Christ, the first and most exalted of the creatures of God, existed before the rest were created, and is not like any thing else that was made. I call this the characteristic principle of Arianism; because, whatever traces of it some have pretended to discover in more ancient writers, Arius is universally allowed to be the first who taught it systematically; and this principle was the opinion for which he was condemned by the council of Nice in the beginning of the fourth century. The writings of Arius, in which he unfolded and defended his system, were burnt by the authority which condemned his opinions. But a few of his epistles, the creed which he gave in to Constantine, and the sentence pronounced against him by the council of Nice, are extant; from a comparison of which, a candid inquirer may attain a clear conception of the outlines of his system. His system was this—the one Eternal God, the source of all being and power, did, in the beginning, before any thing was made, produce by his own will a most perfect Creature, to whom he communicated a large measure of glory and power. By this Creature, God made the worlds, all things that are in heaven and that are in earth, so that he alone proceeded immediately from God, while all other creatures not only existed after him, but were called into being by his instrumentality, and placed by the

* Mosheim's Eccles. Hist. Cent. II. Part II. ch. V.

Father under his administration. Having been the Creator of the first man, he was from the beginning the medium of all divine communication with the human race. He appeared to the patriarchs; he spake by the prophets, and in the fulness of time he was incarnate, *i. e.* clothed with that body, which, by the immediate operation of God, was formed out of the Virgin Mary: and thus, according to the Arian system, the man Christ Jesus had a real body, like his brethren. But that body, instead of being animated by a human soul, was informed by the super-angelical spirit, who had been with God from the beginning, who condescended to leave that glory, partook in the sorrow and agony which filled up the life of Jesus, and in recompense of this humiliation and obedience, was exalted to be the Saviour, the Sovereign and the Judge of mankind.

Arius professed to have received this faith from the gospel, and to hold the sense of the Scriptures; and he might suppose that his system reconciled those passages which speak of the dignity and eternity of the Son of God, with those which seem to imply an inferiority to the Father. It appeared to him, that this first creature, upon account of the super-eminent glory and power communicated to him, might without impropriety be called the only begotten Son of God, and God; and he admitted that this Creature was in one sense eternal, because he proceeded from God before the existence of those measures of time, which arise from the motion and succession of created objects. He thought himself at liberty, therefore, to hold this language in his creed, "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, and in his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made by him, begotten before all ages, God the word, by whom all things were made in heaven and in earth." But although all these expressions, except one, "who was made by him," might have been used by those who held the received opinions, there were three points in his system which were condemned by the council. He said of the Son, *ην ποτε ουκ ην—πριν γεννηθηναι ουκ ην*—and *εξ ουκ οντων εγενετο*. The meaning of the three points upon which he was condemned was this. Although Arius carried back the existence of the Son before all worlds, and so before all times, yet it was possible, according to his system, to conceive some point from whence that existence commenced. The Son had no existence till the act of the Father produced him, and he was produced, not out of the substance of the Father, but like other creatures, out of nothing. We suffer persecution, says Arius in one of his epistles, because we have said, the Son hath a beginning, but God hath no beginning, and because we have asserted that the Son is out of nothing.* This opinion was opposed by the authority of successive councils, and by the decrees of the Roman Emperors, who had by this time embraced Christianity, and those by whom it was avowed were exposed to contumely and barbarity. Before the end of the fourth century it was extirpated in the greater part of the Roman empire, and appears to have been so much forgotten, that all the Divines who wrote upon this subject after that period till the Reformation, were almost wholly employed, not in explaining or combating the Arian system, but in proposing different modifications of that which I am to state as the

* K. λ. apud Epiph. H. 69. N. vi.

third opinion concerning the person of Christ. The opinion of Arius revived in the seventeenth century, when the progress of the Reformation allowed greater liberty in religious speculation; and, although it be contrary, not only to the confessions of the established churches of Great Britain, but to the laws of the land, it has appeared with little disguise in many able treatises, and was held with certain qualifications, by some of the most eminent divines in the last century.

The third opinion concerning the person of Christ is, that from all eternity he was God. Neither the Socinians nor the Arians deny that the name of God is ascribed to him. But as, according to their systems, the only foundation of that name is the degree of glory and dominion with which he was invested at an earlier, or a later period, and as the same will, which thus freely distinguished him above the other creatures, may remove the distinction when the purposes of it are accomplished, it is manifestly implied in these systems, that Christ has a dependence upon the will of another, and a possibility of change, which require that the word God, when applied to the Son, be understood in a sense very different from that in which it is applied to Him who from everlasting to everlasting is God. Although therefore the three opinions coincide in the use of the same name, the third is essentially distinguished from the second as well as from the first in this point, that according to it Christ eternally and necessarily co-existed with God. All the perfections of the divine nature belong to him essentially; no past time can be conceived in which he did not possess them, and no time shall arrive hereafter in which any of them can be separated from him.

There has been much controversy whether this was the general opinion of the Christian church before the council of Nice. Petavius, a learned Jesuit, in his immense work, entitled *Dogmata Theologica*, has laboured to show, that the Fathers of the first three centuries inclined to Arianism, and have in many places spoken of Christ as an inferior God. Bishop Bull, who wrote in the seventeenth century, and is by much the ablest defender of this third opinion, has rendered it, in my opinion, more than probable that Petavius gives a false representation of those who are called the Ante-Nicene Fathers, and that, although upon many occasions they expressed themselves loosely and inaccurately, yet it was the constant opinion of the most respectable writers in the first three centuries, that Christ was from eternity God. But the truth is, this controversy concerning the opinion of the Ante-Nicene Fathers has derived more importance from the labour and zeal with which it has been agitated than it deserves. For the question does not depend upon human authority; and in whatever manner ancient writers have expressed themselves upon this subject, the truth remains the same. Even although Dr. Priestley could establish the position which he has maintained in other smaller treatises, and in a great work of four octavo volumes, entitled, the *History of Early Opinions concerning the person of Christ*, that the Christian church from the earliest times was in general what he calls Unitarian, and that the Godhead of the Son, in the proper sense of the word, was unknown to the great body of Christians, and is found only occasionally mentioned in the works of a few authors; still the matter rests upon its original ground, and the question recurs, which of

the three opinions concerning the person of Christ is most agreeable to the revelation made in Scripture upon that subject. We derive from the study of the ancient Christian writers the history of the progress of theological opinions: we may learn the manner in which very able men, who bestowed their whole attention upon theological subjects, illustrated and defended the opinions which they held, and we may thus be assisted in understanding the truth, and directed where to find the proper arguments in support of it. But these arguments must ultimately be drawn from Scripture, and Dr. Clarke, however persons may differ as to the merits of his system, of which I shall have occasion to speak afterwards, must be allowed to have suggested the only proper method of attaining the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity, by collecting all the texts in which there is any mention of that doctrine. You will understand, then, that when at any time I quote the sayings of ancient or respectable Christian writers, I quote them as evidences of what their opinion was, not as proofs that that opinion was true; and you will agree with me in thinking, that I should very much mispend your time, if I entered into a minute investigation of those passages in their works which appear to be contradictory, and followed the labours of many modern authors in thus endeavouring to ascertain what were the sentiments of Tertullian, Eusebius, or Origen.

But while we disclaim every kind of submission to the authority of the Fathers, there are expressions which recur frequently in their writings so marked and significant, that they deserve to be brought forward, as they may assist you in understanding what the third opinion concerning the person of Christ truly is. The Ante-Nicene Fathers often speak of the kindling of one light by another, as the image which most fitly expresses the generation of the Son from the Father, because in this case there is no separation or difference of kind. The original light remains undiminished, and that which is kindled appears to be the same. They say, that as the sun in the heavens cannot exist without emitting light, as no interval can be conceived between the existence of the sun and the emission of his rays, so Christ always existed with God; and they argue the eternity of Christ from his being the wisdom, the reason, what the Greek writers called the *λογος* of the Father. The words of Athanasius, the great antagonist of Arius, are these, *ὁ ὢν Θεός. ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ οὐτὰ τὸν λόγον ἔχει καὶ οὐτε ὁ λόγος ἐπιγεγεννην, οὐκ ὢν πρότερον, οὐτε ὁ πατὴρ ἀλόγος ἦν ποτε.** The meaning of these, and other similitudes, with which the Ante-Nicene Fathers abound, was precisely ascertained by that word which the council of Nice adopted in opposition to the opinion of Arius. They said that the Son is *ὁμοουσιος* with the Father. This word the Arians could not, in consistency with their principles, admit into their confession. They held that the Son was produced immediately by the Father out of nothing. But they saw that, if he be of the same substance with God, he is God, and that if he is God, he cannot have a temporary precarious existence, but must have always been with the Father what he now is. This word therefore became the mark of distinction between the second and the third opinions concerning

* Athanas. Orat. passim.

the person of Christ, and the precise amount of *ὁμοσσιος* when applied to the Son, is this, that although it be implied in the name of the Son, that he proceeded from the Father, and although, in reference to his proceeding from God, he be called the only begotten of the Father, yet the essential glory and perfections of the Father and the Son are the same.

It is further to be stated, that while the Socinians believed the Christ to be a mere man, in whom an extraordinary measure of the power of God dwelt, while the Arians believed that the Christ was composed of a super-angelical spirit, and a human body, those who hold the third opinion believe that Christ assumed, at the incarnation, the complete human nature into union with the divine; in other words, that the body of Christ was animated by a human soul, and this soul was so united with the Godhead that the divine and human nature formed one person. I enter not at present into the grounds of this third opinion. I mean only to state what it is, and in order to assist your apprehension of both parts of it, I shall recite to you a part of the Nicene Creed, by which this third opinion was more clearly defined than it had been before, and those parts of the confessions of the two established churches in Britain, by which it appears that both of them have adopted the third opinion concerning the person of Christ. The words of the Nicene Creed, translated literally from the Greek, are these: "We believe in one God, the Father, Almighty, maker of all things, both visible and invisible, and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, that is to say, of the substance of the Father, God of God, light of light, very God of very God, begotten not made, of the same substance with the Father, by whom all things were made both in heaven and in earth, who for us men, and for our salvation, came down, and was incarnate, being made man." The second of the thirty-nine articles of the church of England is in these words: "The Son, which is the word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, of her substance, so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the godhead and manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man." The words of our Confession of Faith are: "The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance, so that two whole perfect and distinct natures, the Godhead and the Manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person; without conversion, composition or confusion, which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ."

CHAPTER II.

SIMPLEST OPINION CONCERNING THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

HAVING stated the three opinions concerning the person of Christ, to which all others may be reduced, I proceed to compare the grounds upon which they rest.

And here I must begin with observing, that general reasonings concerning the probability of any of these opinions, or its apparent suitability to the end of Christ's manifestation, ought not to enter into this comparison. Ingenious men have said plausible things in the way of general reasoning in support of all the three. It may to some appear difficult to balance one of the speculations against the other, because men will be inclined to give a preference according to the complexion of their understanding, and their former habits of thinking. But you will be satisfied that such reasonings are of little or no weight in the scale of evidence, when you recollect how soon they lead us beyond our depth. Probability in this subject depends upon a multitude of circumstances, which are not within the sphere of our observation. Fitness or expediency in this subject depends upon the order and the designs of that universal government of which we see only a part. The fact, that Jesus Christ appeared in the land of Judea the teacher of a new religion, could not have been investigated by reason, but like all other facts is received upon credible testimony. The particular character and dignity of this person therefore, is a matter of revelation to be gathered from the books that inform us of his appearance; and the only solid ground of any opinion concerning his character is a right interpretation of the books in which it is described. After we have attained by sound criticism the information which is thus afforded us, reason may be employed in vindicating the opinion which that information warrants us to hold, in bringing forward those views of its expediency which revelation enables us to assign, and in balancing the difficulties which may adhere to it, against those difficulties and objections which appear to attend other opinions not taught by Scripture. Reasoning comes here in its proper place to support our faith, by being opposed to other reasonings that attempt to shake it, and to rescue the opinion that is delivered in the word of God from the charge of absurdity. But we profess to learn the opinion from the Scriptures; and we hold it with firmness, because it is revealed.

This general observation suggests the plan upon which I mean to proceed in comparing the grounds of the three opinions. I defer all speculations concerning them, till we have learned what the Scrip

tures teach. I begin with the simplest propositions, advancing, as the information of Scripture leads us, to those which are farther removed from ordinary apprehension; and in this way, I shall not arrive at the most intricate parts of the subject, till our minds are established in the belief of those facts which ought to guide our reasonings. This patient method of proceeding is not the most favourable to disputation upon this subject; it is not the best calculated for lecturing upon it in a showy amusing manner; but it appears to me that in which I ought to persevere, as the only method becoming our distance, and the certain method of attaining truth.

The simplest opinion concerning the person of Christ is, that he was merely a man, *ψιλος ανθρωπος*; and the advocates of this opinion rest it upon numberless passages of Scripture, upon a solution of those declarations concerning Christ, which appear to be inconsistent with their opinion, and upon the insuperable difficulties in which they represent all other opinions as involved. I lay aside at present all consideration of these difficulties, because I consider every speculation concerning them, as calculated to create a prejudice either for or against the evidence that is to be examined; and I direct your attention only to the Scripture grounds upon which this opinion is rested, and the declarations of Scripture by which it is opposed.

I take the Scripture grounds of this opinion from a book published about the year 1773 by Mr. Lindsey, who gave the world a pledge of his honesty, by resigning his preferment in the Church of England, because he held this opinion. The following arguments and testimonies, he says, will abundantly show that Christ was a man like ourselves, saving those extraordinary gifts of divine wisdom and power by which he was distinguished from the rest of mankind. 1. The prophecies that went before concerning Christ speak of him as a man.—the seed of the woman; the seed of Abraham; a prophet like to Moses; the son of David. 2. In consequence of these predictions, the Jews in all times have expected the Messiah to be a man. “Hath not the Scripture said,” observe the people in the gospel of John, “that Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?” 3. Christ’s appearance in the world; his birth; his increase in wisdom and stature; and the visible circumstances of his condition answered to the prophecies concerning him that he was to be a man. 4. Christ continually spake of himself as a man, the son of man being the phrase by which he commonly designed himself; and the son of God, the title which he sometimes assumed, admitting of an interpretation which does not contradict his being a man. 5. John, his forerunner, calls him a man. And, 6. The four evangelists show by their narration that they took him to be a man; and in the other books of the New Testament he is often so designed.

The testimonies which Mr. Lindsey has collected under these heads* prove that Christ was truly a man; they undoubtedly convey an impression that he was a man in all respects like us; and, if they contained the whole doctrine of Scripture concerning the nature and person of Christ, the first opinion would claim to be received upon the

* Sequel to Apology, by Theophilus Lindsey, ch. 7.

highest possible evidence. But Mr. Lindsey is aware that there are passages in Scripture which appear to contradict this opinion. Like all those who have agreed with him in opinion, he attempts to give a solution of them; and the point that must be considered is, whether there are declarations in Scripture of such a kind, as to efface the impression made by the testimonies collected under the six heads now mentioned, and to show that the first opinion rests upon a partial view of Scripture.

CHAPTER III.

PRE-EXISTENCE OF JESUS.

THE philosophy which you have learned has completely exploded the fanciful doctrine of some ancient sects, that the souls of men existed before they animated those bodies with which we behold them connected. You know that this doctrine supposes a fact, which is nowhere revealed, which is not vouched by human testimony, which is not supported by any solid argument, and is contradicted by the principle of consciousness. You believe that the souls of men began to exist with their bodies; and, although you cannot explain the time or the manner of the union between these two companions, you never ascribe to the being of the man any date more ancient than the first formation of his body. If then there be evidence that Christ had a being before he was conceived of the Virgin Mary, he cannot be a man like us. He may be truly a man with all the essential properties of human nature, so that there is no impropriety in ascribing to him the name of man, or the Son of Man. But the opinion of those who consider him as *ψιλος ανθρωπος*, nothing more than man, must be false. Accordingly all those who hold the second and third opinions, oppose to the Socinian system one simple position, viz. there is evidence from Scripture of the pre-existence of Jesus Christ. This position is sufficient to overturn the first opinion, and it is necessary to lay a foundation for the second and third. For, although it does not follow from the pre-existence of Christ, either that he is the most exalted creature in the universe, or that he is God, yet, if he did not exist before he was born of Mary, he cannot be either the one or the other.

A position which contradicts the first opinion, and which is assumed in the other two, seems to be the proper point from which to set out in examining the three opinions concerning the person of Christ. Unless you are satisfied of the truth of this position, you will not be disposed to give yourselves much trouble in canvassing the second and third opinions. But if you find evidence, that by his pre-existence he is more than man, it will be natural to proceed to inquire how far he is exalted above man, whether he is a creature of a higher rank, or whether he be entirely exempted from the order of creatures.

In examining this position, I shall first bring forward those passages of Scripture, which teach plainly that our Saviour did pre-exist; and I shall next direct your attention to those passages, which ascribe to him different actions in his state of pre-existence. From the first set of passages, I do not mean to derive any thing more than simply

a proof of the pre-existence of Jesus ; but, in attending to the second, we shall unavoidably be led by the descriptions of those actions which are ascribed to Christ, to consider his original character and dignity, and we shall thus pass naturally from the proofs of his pre-existence to the proofs of a higher point, to those passages, upon a right interpretation of which turns the decision of the question between the second and third opinions.

I shall at present bring forward only those passages of Scripture which teach plainly that our Saviour existed before he was born of Mary ; and, in reviewing them, I shall lay before you those solutions of their meaning which are given by the more early or the later Socinian writers, that you may judge how far it is easy to reconcile them with the opinion of our Lord's being *ῥῆλος ἀνθρώπος*.

You will recollect a language which runs through a great part of the New Testament, that "God sent Jesus into the world," that Jesus "came in the flesh," "was made flesh," "was made a little lower than the angels," "took part of flesh and blood." Now, this language is greatly wanting in propriety and significancy, if Jesus began to exist at that time when he is said to have come in the flesh ; whereas the expressions recited are the very manner in which it is necessary to speak of his becoming a man, if he had an existence beforehand. A language which thus implies that Jesus existed before he was born of Mary, being found in numberless places, may be considered as meant to correct the inference which might otherwise be drawn from the phraseology of Scripture, in which he is spoken of as a man. At the same time you will not consider this implication as the proper ground upon which to rest so important a conclusion. We derive the knowledge of the pre-existence of Jesus from explicit declarations of Scripture, and, having in this way attained assurance of the fact, we find the general phraseology of Scripture so contrived as to reconcile this fact with his being truly a man. These explicit declarations were made by John the Baptist, by our Lord himself, and by his Apostles.

1. John the Baptist bore witness of Jesus in these words. Jo. i. 15, 30. "After me cometh a man, which is preferred before me, for he was before me," *πρωτος μου ἦν*. You would expect *πρωτερος* instead of *πρωτος*. But there are many instances in the best Greek writers of a similar construction. *Ἐρχε τε Περσων πρωτον παντων Δαξειον*, is an expression used by Aristophanes ;* and if *πρωτος μου*, *first*, when compared with me, be equivalent to *πρωτερος μου*, there seems to be here a plain declaration of the pre-existence of Jesus. The Socinian interpretation is, "the Christ, who is to begin his ministry after me, has by the divine appointment been preferred before me, because he is my chief or principal, *πρωτοστατης μου*, and I am only his servant." But Bishop Pearson, on the second article of the creed, has well observed, that according to this interpretation a thing is made the reason of itself. He is preferred before me, because he is my chief ; whereas if *πρωτος μου ἦν* be considered as expressive of time, not of dignity, it contains a reason for the former clause. He who was born a few months after me, and whose ministry begins after mine, has been placed before me,

* Aristoph. *Οευνθες*, lin. 484.

has a higher station assigned him in the economy of that dispensation which is now opening, because he had an existence before me. It is true that the three other evangelists make John the Baptist say, "He that cometh after me is mightier than I." *ισχυροτερος μου*. But you will perceive, when you compare the four, that the phrase is equivalent to *εμπροσθεν μου*, "is preferred before me," not to *πρωτος μου*. For the speech in the other three consists only of one clause; and John, who, writing after the others, has supplied many things that were wanting in them, added the words *οτι πρωτος μου ην*. He has used the same expression in another place of his gospel, where it must denote time. If the world hate you, says Jesus to his disciples, *γνωσχετε οτι εμε τρωτον υμων μεμισηκε*. You will observe too, that if the phrase had had the uncommon remote meaning which the Socinians affix to it, instead of *πρωτος ην*, it should have been *πρωτος εστι*. For unless Jesus pre-existed, he was not the chief of John till he entered upon his ministry, the beginning of which John was only announcing. Lardner, aware probably of the force of the objections made by Bishop Pearson, has given another interpretation of these words, which some of the modern Socinians consider as probably expressing the meaning still more truly. "He that cometh after me has always been before me, or in my view, *i. e.* present to my mind as the object of my continual expectation and reverence; for he was my superior." I leave you to judge, whether it is likely that the hearers of John would affix either the latter or the former Socinian meaning to his words, and whether a declaration, which he repeats frequently as his witness to the Messiah, is not to be understood according to the plain obvious sense given in our translation.

John iii. 31. "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all." John is making a comparison between himself and Jesus. "He must increase, but I must decrease." The 31st verse states a distinction, not merely in respect of dignity, but in respect of origin and extraction; and the heavenly extraction of Jesus is introduced as the ground of his superior dignity.

I have called your attention to this passage, because it appears to me to be the answer to a sophism which is frequent in the modern Socinian writers. When such expressions, as Jesus being sent from God and coming from heaven, are urged in proof of his pre-existence, they uniformly answer, that these expressions mean nothing more than that he received a divine commission. "For," they say, "John also is called a man sent from God; and our Lord, upon one occasion, asked the chief priests, the baptism of John, was it from heaven, or was it from men? he meant was it of divine or of human institution; and it was the same thing, whether he had asked did John come from heaven, or was his baptism from heaven?" But the words of John Baptist in this place show, that he understood there would have been an essential difference between the two questions. He asserts in other places, that he was sent by God to baptize with water; and therefore his baptism might be said to be from heaven. But here he admits that he himself was of earth, whereas the person to whom he bore witness was from heaven. Their commission had the same authority; for both were sent by God. But the one was a man who

received this commission after he was born: the other was a Being who, having existed before in heaven, came from heaven, and was made man, that he might execute his commission.

John iii. 13. "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." These words appear to contain a declaration that the Son of man came down from heaven. But, in order to elude the force of this declaration, two different expositions have been given. The one was the exposition of Socinus and his immediate followers; the other is adopted by the modern Socinians. The first is this: "It is very probable, and agreeable to the words of Scripture, that Christ, between the time of his birth, and his entering upon the office of Messiah, was translated by God to heaven, and remained there some time, that he might see and hear those things which he was to publish to the world. As Moses, who is acknowledged to be a type of Jesus, was forty days on the mount with God, and brought from thence the two tables of the law, and the pattern of all things pertaining to the worship of God, so it was most fit that Jesus should go up to heaven, of which Sinai was a type; and it is probable that the time of our Lord's temptation, when he is said to have been forty days in the wilderness, was the time of his being admitted to converse with God in heaven." According to this exposition our Lord says to Nicodemus, no man hath ascended up to heaven, to learn these heavenly things which I have to tell you, but he who came down from heaven, after he was instructed in them, even the Son of man, who *was*—rendering *was* the imperfect participle, who was in heaven. This exposition was employed to solve all those passages where we read of Christ's coming from heaven, proceeding from the Father, being sent by God. But you will observe, that there is no other proof of the fact upon which this exposition proceeds but this single circumstance, that it is possible, in this way, to explain such passages as these, without supposing the pre-existence of Jesus. His translation to heaven is admitted without evidence, in order to exclude his pre-existence. I say without evidence. For although it would have been most honourable for a man to be thus admitted to converse with God in heaven, although, according to the Socinian system, it is of the utmost importance to the followers of Jesus to have this assurance, that the words spoken by a man like themselves, are truly the words of God, there is not any one passage in the New Testament which plainly declares, or even by certain inference implies, that he was translated to heaven. Other circumstances are mentioned in the short accounts that are given us of that part of his life which elapsed before he appeared preaching the Gospel. But this fact, in comparison of which most of them are insignificant, is passed over in silence by all the evangelists.

The modern Socinians have abandoned an exposition thus resting upon a conjecture, which is not only destitute of evidence, but is contradicted by the silence of the historians. And they have adopted another exposition, founded upon the figurative language which abounds in Scripture. In our way of apprehension, they say, a man that would be acquainted with the secrets of the divine will should go to heaven to converse with God. Accordingly it is said by Moses: "The commandment which I command thee this day is not in

heaven, that thou shouldest say, who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it and do it.”* But if ascending to heaven easily signifies being admitted to the knowledge of the divine counsels, coming down from heaven may signify being authorized to reveal it to men; and being in heaven, or in the bosom of the Father, means no more than being highly favoured of God, and made acquainted with his counsels. The declaration of Jesus to Nicodemus, therefore, does not necessarily imply a literal ascent and descent; but, when stripped of the metaphorical language in which it is clothed, it amounts merely to this—He alone was admitted to an intimate knowledge of the will of God, and authorized to reveal it to men.

This exposition is much more plausible than the former; and it is agreeable to that interpretation which we are often obliged to give to figurative language. But you will observe that the language in this passage is not figurative; the words are perfectly simple; there is no obvious necessity for departing from that sense which is agreeable to the plain construction of them; and if a liberty is allowed of considering plain language as figurative, in order to give it a meaning very remote, and evade a doctrine which it seems clearly to teach, there can be no certainty in the declarations of Scripture. You will observe also, that according to this exposition there is a tautology in the words, which is both ungraceful and unmeaning. No man hath known the divine counsels but he who has a commission to declare them, even the Son of man, who is intimately acquainted with them. On the other hand, if you understand the second clause, according to the literal import of the words, and according to many other declarations of the New Testament, to denote a real descent from heaven, then the first and third clauses are clearly distinguished. If you consider *ων* as the imperfect participle, the third clause means, the Son of man who was in heaven before he descended. If you consider *ων* as the present participle, you give the third clause a meaning which cannot be reconciled with the Socinian system, but which is adopted by our translators in opposition to that system; the Son of Man, who, being according to the views communicated in other passages of Scripture both God and man, is in heaven while he now dwells upon earth. There is an apparent difficulty in the clause, “No man hath ascended up to heaven but the Son of Man;” for we know that Elijah did ascend, and our Lord had not ascended when he spake these words. But attention to the context enables us, without doing violence to the words, by an accommodation to circumstances which is easy and obvious, to remove that difficulty. Our Lord had been stating to Nicodemus some of the doctrines of the Christian religion, at which this master of Israel is stumbled, saying, “How can these things be?” Our Lord answers in words most expressive of the dignity of his character, and the entire credit to which he was entitled. “We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?” *i. e.* There are doctrines more sublime and heavenly than these at which you are stumbled. My doctrine, according to the expression of Moses with which you are well

acquainted, may be said to be in heaven; and you can learn it from none but me, for no person has ascended to heaven for the purpose of bringing it from thence, *εἰ μὴ*, unless you choose to apply that expression to the person, who, having been in heaven, came down from it. He is better qualified to instruct you in heavenly things, than if he had ascended for the purpose of bringing them down.

John vi. 62. "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?" The ancient and the modern Socinians explain away this declaration, in the same manner as that which we have now been considering. One of their latest commentaries is in these words:—"When you shall see me go up to heaven to God, where I was before," *i. e.* from whom I have received my instructions and authority, "you will then understand the language which I now hold with you." As this declaration of the pre-existence of Jesus is simpler and less embarrassed with other circumstances than that in the third chapter, so the context necessarily leads us to reject the Socinian paraphrase, and to understand the words in their obvious sense. Our Lord had been holding a long discourse with the Jews, in which he spoke of himself as the "bread of life that came down from heaven." The Jews understood this to be an assertion of his having been in heaven, and they opposed to it their knowledge of his birth. "Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven." Our Lord, in answer to their murmurings, repeats and enforces his former assertion; and, after he had left the synagogue, understanding from his disciples that they also were offended at this hard saying, he says to them, "Doth this offend you? what and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before;" *i. e.* to heaven, of which he had been speaking. The expression implies a literal ascent to heaven, which was to be an object of sense, *σεωχτε*; and the intimation of this glorious event, which was to remove all their doubts and their offence, is conjoined with a repetition in simple language of that assertion at which they had been offended. The Evangelist had told us the sense which the Jews affixed to that assertion: the complaint of the disciples implies that they affixed the same sense to it; and we cannot suppose that they were mistaken, because this private declaration of our Lord, where I was before, is expressly calculated to confirm them in the mistake. You have our Lord, therefore, in this sixth chapter of John, holding both in the synagogue of the Jews, and in a confidential intercourse with the disciples, such a language as his hearers understood to mean that he was in heaven, before they saw him upon earth.

John viii. 58. "Before Abraham was, I am." The old Socinian interpretation was:—"I exist before that Patriarch has become, according to the import of the name Abraham, the Father of many nations; for that name is to receive its fulfilment by the preaching of my religion, in which all the nations of the earth are to be blessed through the seed of Abraham." But this is saying nothing; for the Jews, to whom our Lord is speaking, existed also before this event: I am, and ye all are, before the Patriarch becomes Abraham in this sense. The modern Socinian interpretation is not more plausible. "Before Abraham was born, I am he:" *i. e.* the Christ, in the des-

tion and appointment of God. My commission as Messiah was fixed and determined by the Almighty, before Abraham had a being. But this is saying nothing peculiar to the Messiah; for known to God are all his works. The existence and the circumstances of the meanest creatures were as much fore-ordained as those of the highest angel. The natural meaning of the words is, that Christ had a being before the birth of Abraham. *Πρην γενεσθαι εχεινον* is a common classical phrase for, before his birth: and although *εγω ην* might rather have been expected, as he is speaking of existence in a past time, yet the present tense does affirm existence; and there is a reason for this peculiar mode of expression which will occur afterwards. This obvious interpretation of the words is very much confirmed by the circumstances in which they were spoken. Our Lord had said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad." The Jews understood from this expression that he had seen Abraham, that is, they understood him to affirm that he existed in Abraham's day; and they answered, "Thou art not fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" Our Lord had not said that he had seen Abraham, but, because it was true, he does not disavow it; and he confirms the conclusion which they had drawn from his former saying, by declaring expressly that he existed not only in the time, but before the birth of Abraham. "Before Abraham was, I am." They did not mistake his meaning; but they were filled with indignation at the presumption which his words appeared to them to discover; and "they took up stones to cast at him." Other texts, as John xvi. 28, John xiii. 3, 1 Cor. xv. 47, 2 Cor. viii. 9, also teach the pre-existence of Jesus.

To assist you in understanding the principles of that solution, by which the Socinians endeavour to evade the force of the plainest declarations concerning the pre-existence of Jesus, I shall give a particular account of the manner in which they explain John xvii. 5. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine ownself, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." Jesus appears in this place to declare explicitly, and at a most solemn time, when he "lift up his eyes to heaven," and in the hearing of his disciples prayed to God immediately before he went out to the garden where he was betrayed, that he had glory with the Father before the world was: and it is very remarkable that he introduces the mention of this glory, when it was not necessary to complete the sense of any proposition; for he is praying that God would glorify him. And yet, as if on purpose to prevent the apostles who heard the prayer from supposing that he was asking that which he had not possessed in any former period, he adds, "with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." To a plain reader it would seem, that, if Jesus never had any such glory, these words, uttered in such circumstances, discover the highest presumption and impiety. But, observe the Socinian exposition: "The glory for which Jesus prays is something posterior to his sufferings; yet he speaks of it in the 22d and 24th verses as already given him, *την δοξαν την εμην ην εδωκας εμοι*. He had not at this time received it; but the Father had promised it. And since the promise of God can never fail, he considers it as fully his own as if he had been in possession of it. In the same manner he says he

had glory with God before the world was ; not that he had really been in possession of it before the world was, but because it was then destined for him by God. God is said to have ‘chosen us before the foundation of the world ;’ and the kingdom of heaven is said to be prepared for us from the beginning of the world, although we had then no being. And so Christ says that God loved him, and that he had glory with God before he had a being. And the glory for which he prays is not his own private advancement, but the success of that gospel by which the virtue and happiness of mankind were to be promoted. This had been his sole aim, for which he had lived, and for which he was about to die. And now, at the approach of death, he says, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, complete thine own work in the happy beneficial consequences of my death, and speedy restoration to life, as in thine all-wise eternal purpose thou hast decreed.” These are the most exalted sentiments which can be conceived to animate a human breast : and I doubt not you feel, as I have often felt, that admiration of these sentiments creates a kind of prejudice in favour of that interpretation, which supposes them to be uttered, in the most trying scenes, by a mere man. But we should recollect that there are many occasions in which the influence of the principle of admiration makes us overlook the simplicity of truth ; and that the excellence of an object is then really known, not when it is magnified by your imaginations in a particular light, but when its whole nature is considered. The Scriptures, by teaching clearly the pre-existence of Jesus, by representing him as acting at all times under a consciousness of his original dignity, and an assurance of his exaltation, do not leave room for that enigmatical exposition of the words of this prayer, by which his sentiments at the close of his life are assimilated to the heroism of mortals. The expressions which he uses, according to the plain sense of them, are becoming him who knew whence he came and whither he was going ; and, if they do not present us with an extraordinary effort of mere human virtue in the Son of man, they present us with a worthier object of our faith and hope, the Son of God, who had been made man returning to his Father.

Before I leave those passages which teach the pre-existence of Jesus, it is proper to speak of a title, the true meaning of which is intimately connected with this subject. One of the grounds of the Socinian opinion, I said, is this, that Jesus commonly designs himself the Son of man, and that the other title, the Son of God, which he sometimes assumes, admits of an interpretation not inconsistent with his being a mere man. This interpretation the Socinians derive from different passages of Scripture, where Jesus is styled the Son of God, for reasons that have no connexion with his existence in a previous state. The first is his miraculous conception. The angel said to Mary, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee ; therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee,” *i. e.* begotten of thee, “shall be called the Son of God.” The second is the distinguished commission which he received as Messiah, and the honour conferred upon him. For, in the language of the New Testament, the Christ, or Messiah, and the Son of God, are used as equivalent interchangeable terms. “We believe.”

said the disciples, "that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The High Priest asked Jesus at his trial, "Art thou the Son of the blessed?" and John concludes his gospel with saying, "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." There is still a third reason upon account of which Jesus is called in Scripture the Son of God, and that is his resurrection. For Paul says, Acts xiii. 33, "God hath fulfilled the promise which was made unto the fathers, in that he hath raised up Jesus again, as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee:" and he says in his Epistle to the Romans, "Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead." It appears undeniably from these passages that there is an intimate connection in the language of Scripture between this title, the Son of God, and these three circumstances, the miraculous conception, the office, and the resurrection of Jesus. But none of these three necessarily imply that he existed in a previous state; and, therefore, it appears to me, that although it be natural to form the most exalted conceptions of a person called the Son of God, yet, if no other premises were given us, we should not be warranted to infer the pre-existence of Jesus from his bearing that name. You must first establish, by other evidence, that he did pre-exist, and then you infer from his being called the Son of God, that the meaning of that name is not exhausted by his miraculous conception, his office, and his resurrection, but that it serves farther to intimate the manner of his pre-existence. This reasoning would be fair and conclusive, if our Lord were called simply the Son of God. But its conclusiveness appears more manifest, when you consider those discriminating epithets which are joined to this name. God is our father by creation, and by the grace of the Gospel, and they who partake of that grace are often called his sons. But Jesus Christ is styled his own Son, the Son of his love, his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased; and in the Gospels and Epistles of John, the only begotten Son of God; all which imply, that the highest meaning of this title belongs to Jesus. It has been said that the phrase, only begotten Son, which is peculiar to John, means nothing more than beloved. But these two phrases are not synonymous amongst men. A child may be only begotten without being beloved, and he may be beloved without being only begotten. It is irreverent to suppose that so significant a phrase would be employed by John upon such a subject, in a sense so inferior to its natural import. And it is known that the Christians, from the earliest times, adopted in their creeds this phrase, his only begotten Son, or his only Son, as distinguishing Jesus from every other son of God.

Now, you will observe, that although the name of the Son of God is connected in Scripture with the miraculous conception of Jesus, his office, and his resurrection, none of these three come up to the meaning of this phrase, the only Son of God. Not his miraculous conception,—he was indeed conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost. But Adam also is called the Son of God; and unless you deny that Jesus was truly the son of Mary, you must admit that there was in this respect still greater propriety in giving the name of the Son of God to a person, who, being formed without father or mother out

of the dust of the earth, was still more immediately the workmanship of God.—Not his office as Messiah; for many special messengers had been sent by God to men in former times. In allusion to them, Jesus is often styled a prophet, a messenger, the sent of God. But the mark of distinction between him and them, which some prophecies of the Old Testament announce, and which the books of the New Testament often express, is this, that he is the Son of God, his only begotten Son; words which have no meaning, if they refer purely to that commission which he received in common with others, and which are always so introduced as to lead our thoughts to a character which he had before he received the commission. Neither does the resurrection of Jesus come up to the meaning of the phrase, the only begotten Son of God. He was indeed brought by the Father out of the bowels of the earth. But we are taught that all who are in their graves shall rise; and he himself hath said that they who are accounted worthy to obtain the world to come, are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection, *υἱοὶ εἰσι τοῦ Θεοῦ, τῆς ἀναστάσεως υἱοὶ οὐτεῖς*. According to the views given in Scripture, Jesus is the first that rose from the dead never to die any more, and the resurrection of good men is the effect of his. He is thus, in respect of his resurrection, the first among many brethren. “Every one in his own order, Christ the first fruits; afterwards they that are Christ’s.” His resurrection was indeed the demonstration, that that name which he had taken to himself during his life did really belong to him; and therefore it is said, he “was declared to be the Son of God with power by his resurrection.” But to say that his resurrection made him the Son of God, is to confound the evidence of a thing with the thing itself.

These few remarks may satisfy you, that neither the miraculous conception of Jesus, nor his office, nor his resurrection, contains the full import of this name, the only begotten Son of God. But there is a more ancient and a more exalted title to this name, which is inseparable from his nature. I enter not at present into the various and intricate speculations to which this subject has given occasion. We shall be better prepared afterwards for touching them slightly. I meant only, by connecting the mention of this name with those passages which teach the pre-existence of Jesus, to make you bear in your minds during the progress of our researches, that the peculiar reasons of a name which you will find uniformly appropriated to Jesus, are to be sought for not in the history of his appearance upon earth, but in those passages which contain the revelation of his pre-existent state.

CHAPTER IV.

ACTIONS ASCRIBED TO JESUS IN HIS PRE-EXISTENT STATE.

Creation.

HAVING drawn from explicit declarations of Scripture sufficient evidence that Jesus existed before he was born of Mary, I am next to direct your attention to those passages which ascribe to him different actions in his pre-existent state. The nature of the actions, and the manner in which they are narrated, will unavoidably lead us to form some conception of the character and dignity which belonged to Jesus before he appeared upon earth; so that, if this branch of the examination shall confirm the belief of the pre-existence of Jesus, it will not only destroy the first opinion, but will assist us in comparing the grounds upon which the second and third opinions rest.

As no action in which we have any concern can be more ancient than creation, it is natural to begin with those passages in which creation is ascribed to Jesus. The Apostle Paul says, Eph. iii. 9, "God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." But as the last words, δι' Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, are not found in the most ancient MSS. and were not quoted by any of the Christian writers before the Council of Nice, it is conjectured by Mill, in whose valuable edition of the Greek Testament all the various readings are collected, that these words were first written in the margin, as a commentary suggested by expressions in the other epistles, and were afterwards adopted by the transcribers of the New Testament into the text. The conjecture appears plausible, and the most zealous defender of the pre-existence of Jesus need not hesitate to subscribe to it: for our faith in this important article, that he is the Creator of the world, does by no means rest upon this incidental expression, which, supposing that it was not originally written by the apostle, would never have obtained a place in the text, had it not been literally derived from the more full declarations contained in other passages of Scripture.

These full declarations are found in the beginning of the gospel of John, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, and in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. All the three appear to teach, explicitly and particularly, that Jesus is the Creator of the world. Yet they have received different interpretations, of which you ought not to be ignorant; and your being able to deduce with certainty that which we account the true meaning of the words, and to defend it against the objections by which it has been attacked.

depends upon the knowledge of circumstances which form so essential a branch of your studies, that I think it my duty to give a particular elucidation of these three passages.

SECTION I.

JOHN i. 1—18.

You will begin with observing the steps by which the apostle proceeds in enunciating his meaning. The first five verses do not of themselves mark out the person to whom they apply. It would seem that a person is intended: For time, *εν αρχη*, place, *προς τον Θεον*, and action, *παντα δι αυτου εγενετο*, are ascribed to *ο Λογος*. But the name is not clear enough to mark out who he is. In the 6th verse there is the proper name of a man, *Ιωαννης*. And it appears from the sequel of the chapter, that this *Ιωαννης* is the person whom we are accustomed to call John the Baptist. It is said of this *Ιωαννης*, in the 7th verse, *οιτος ηλθεν εις μαρτυριαν, ινα μαρτυρηση περι του φωτος*. The article defines the word *φωτος*, and leads you back to a light already spoken of, and consequently supposed to be known to the reader; *i. e.* the light mentioned in the 4th verse, which, from the construction, is unquestionably the same with *ο λογος*. *Εν αυτω, i. e. λογω, ζωη ην, και η ζωη ην το φως των ανθρωπων*. It is said in the 5th verse that this light appears; and the 7th verse establishes a connexion between the appearance of the light and the appearance of John, for he came to bear witness of it. 8th verse, *ουκ ην εκεινος το φως, αλλ' ινα μαρτυρηση περι του φωτος*. The time of this shining of the light must have been posterior to the appearance of John, and the manner of the shining must have been explained by his words, otherwise his testimony could not have been of any use in making men believe. But John the Baptist was the contemporary and the countryman of the writer of this gospel. He died, indeed, at an early period of life. Still, however, many of the persons into whose hands this gospel came, might know perfectly, either from their own recollection, or from what they had heard others report, the general purport of John's testimony, so as to be directed by his words in applying the expression of the evangelist. Those who knew what John the Baptist had said, could not fail to know what was the *το φως* of which he came to bear witness. It is further stated, that the person who had been called in the first five verses, *ο λογος*, and *το φως*, was an inhabitant of earth at the time of John's appearance; for you read in the 10th verse, *εν τω κοσμο ην*—14th verse, *εθεασαμεθα την δοξαν αυτου*. And this glory which was beheld, was not a celestial transient glory, dazzling the sight of mortals like a meteor, and quickly hid in clouds; for *ο λογος σαξ εγενετο, και εσκηνωσεν εν ημιν*. It appeared in a bodily substantial form. The person who has been called *ο λογος*, pitched his tent, dwelt for some time amongst men, and while the glory which they beheld impressed them with a notion of his dignity, he engaged their affections by the grace of his manners; for he was *πληρης χαριτος και αληθειας*. Here are limiting circumstances so peculiar in their nature, that they

cannot apply to any other inhabitant of earth in the days of John Baptist but that extraordinary personage, whose memory was fresh in the minds of his countrymen when this gospel was written, and whose name is expressly mentioned in the 17th verse, *Ἰησοῦς Χριστός*. It deserves particular notice, that with all that simplicity of manner which distinguishes the writer of this gospel, he has inserted this name in such a way as to make it the explication of all that had gone before. He had said in the 14th verse, *ὁ λόγος σαξ ἐγενετο· καὶ ἐσκηνώσεν ἐν ἡμῖν, (καὶ ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς πατρὸς,)* *πληρὴς χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας*. Here he applies to *ὁ λόγος*, the person of whom he had been speaking from the beginning of the chapter, two phrases, *μονογενὴς*, and *πληρὴς χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας*: and in the 17th verse he introduces the name, *Ἰησοῦς Χριστός*, after the repetition of one of these phrases, and before the repetition of the other, manifestly connecting the name with both the phrases. It appears, then, from this general analysis of these eighteen verses, that this evangelist must be not merely a most inconsequential writer, but a writer who purposely and artificially misleads his readers, unless the person who is called *ὁ λόγος* in the first verse be the same who is called *Ἰησοῦς Χριστός* in the 17th, that is, unless the whole of this passage be applicable to Jesus Christ. But if the whole be applicable to him, we have the testimony of an apostle, that all things were made by him. *Πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγενετο· καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγενετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονε*.

I have chosen to lead you in this manner to the knowledge of the person meant by *ὁ λόγος*, because the fairest way of interpreting a passage is to lay the whole of it together, and so bring the sense of an author out of his words. But it is natural to inquire, why did John use this dark expression? Why has he begun his gospel in such a manner as to require this circuitous method of arriving at his meaning? Would it not have been better to have said plainly, In the beginning was Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ was with God, and Jesus Christ was God?

In answer to this question, you will recollect that many of those modes of expression in ancient writers, which appear hurtful to perspicuity, were dictated by some circumstances peculiar to the country, or the times in which the writers lived; and that the obscurity, in which to us such expressions seem to be involved, is removed by the knowledge of those circumstances which rendered them the most proper and significant when they were used. There has been much dispute what were the circumstances that led John to use this expression, *ὁ λόγος*. The subject is involved in considerable obscurity from our imperfect knowledge of the dates of particular tenets. But I shall endeavour to give, in a short compass, the result of a very fatiguing examination of the dispute.

Before the days of our Saviour, there were Targums, *i. e.* Chaldee paraphrases of the Old Testament, for the use of the vulgar Jews, who, upon their return from the Babylonish captivity, did not understand the original Hebrew. As these Targums were composed by the learned men of the nation, and portions of them were read every Sabbath-day in the Synagogues, they may be considered as the national interpretation of the Jewish Scriptures; and they have often been quoted by those who have entered deeply into the argument

from prophecy, as the vouchers of the sense which the Jews affixed to their own predictions before the days of our Saviour. These Targums, in almost every place where Jehovah is mentioned in the Hebrew as talking with men, assisting them, or holding any immediate intercourse with them, have used this circumlocution, the word of Jehovah. In the Hebrew, Jehovah created man in his own image; in the Targum, the word of Jehovah created man. In the Hebrew, Adam and Eve heard the voice of the Lord God; in the Targum, they heard the voice of the word of the Lord God. In the Hebrew, Jehovah thy God, he it is that goeth before thee; in the Targum, Jehovah thy God, his word goeth before thee. Those who are qualified to judge of this matter say that all the personal characters of action are ascribed in the Targums to the Word; and that there are places where the sense renders it impossible to understand the word of Jehovah as merely an idiom of the language equivalent to Jehovah. Thus in the Hebrew it is, God came to Abimelech; in the Targum, his word came from the face of God to Abimelech. And the 110th Psalm is thus paraphrased. Jehovah said to his Word, sit thou at my right hand. We cannot suppose that this mode of expression would have been introduced into the Targums, at the time when they were composed, had it then appeared a novelty; and there is no doubt that, by the weekly reading of the paraphrases, it would become familiar to the ears of the Jews. Accordingly, in the Wisdom of Solomon, a book which is understood to have been written a hundred years before Christ, we meet with the following expression, referring to the judgment upon the land of Egypt: "Thine almighty word leaped down from heaven out of thy royal throne, as a fierce man of war into the midst of a land of destruction, and brought thine unfeigned commandment as a sharp sword, and standing up, filled all things with death, and it touched the heavens, but it stood upon the earth."* This may appear to you only a bold expressive figure for the divine energy which was exerted in the punishment of the Egyptians, in the same manner as that passage in Psalm xxxiii. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made," does not necessarily convey to a mind accustomed to weigh the import of language any thing more than that the heavens were made by the Lord. But there appears the best reason for thinking that the constant use of this circumlocution cherished in the minds of the body of the Jews the belief that there was a person distinct from the Father whose name was the word of Jehovah; and it is certain that Philo, a learned Jew, bred at Alexandria, who lived about the time of our Saviour, whose books were published before his death, speaks in numberless places of the *λογος*, whom he calls a second God, the Son of God, the image of God, the instrument by whom God made the worlds. Philo did not learn this word in the Platonic school; for although *λογος* occurs often in the writing of the later Platonists, who lived in the second and third centuries, there is no evidence that Plato, or any of his disciples before Philo, used *λογος* as the name of a person distinct from God. It is doubted by Mosheim, whether Philo himself believed that there was a distinction; and that indefatigable inquirer has brought together, in

* Wisdom of Solomon, xviii. 15, 16.

his notes upon Cudworth, several passages which appear to me to make it probable that Philo, like many other philosophers, had an esoteric and an exoteric, a secret and an ostensible doctrine. His secret doctrine was, that what his countrymen called *λογος* was nothing else but the conception formed in the mind of God of the work which he was to execute, and that what they accounted a distinction of persons was ideal and nominal, accommodated to the narrowness of our apprehension. But if this was truly his private sentiment, his calling the *λογος* the Son of God, and a second God, is a proof that the opinion concerning the Word of Jehovah as a person, had so firm a possession of the minds of his countrymen, that he did not wish to offend them by teaching openly and unequivocally a doctrine opposite to that which they had derived from Scripture and tradition.

Not long after the writings of Philo were published, there arose the Gnostics, a sect, or rather a multitude of sects, who having learnt in the same Alexandrian school to blend the principles of oriental philosophy with the doctrine of Plato, formed a system most repugnant to the simplicity of Christian faith. It is this system which Paul so often attacks under the name of "false philosophy, strifes of words, endless genealogies, science falsely so called." The foundation of the Gnostic system was the intrinsic and incorrigible depravity of matter. Upon this principle they made a total separation between the spiritual and the material world. Accounting it impossible to educe out of matters any thing which was good, they held that the Supreme Being, who presided over the innumerable spirits that were emanations from himself, did not make this earth, but that a spirit of an inferior nature very far removed in character as well as in rank from the Supreme Being, formed matter into that order which constitutes the world, and gave life to the different creatures that inhabit the earth. They held that this Inferior Spirit was the Ruler of the creatures whom he had made, and they considered men, whose souls he imprisoned in earthly tabernacles, as experiencing under his dominion the misery which necessarily arose from their connexion with matter, and as estranged from the knowledge of the true God. Most of the later sects of the Gnostics rejected every part of the Jewish law, because the books of Moses give a view of the creation inconsistent with their system. But some of the earlier sects, consisting of Alexandrian Jews, incorporated a respect for the law with the principles of their system. They considered the Old Testament dispensation as granted by the *δημιουργος*, the Maker and Ruler of the world, who was incapable, from his want of power, of delivering those who received it from the thralldom of matter: and they looked for a more glorious messenger, whom the compassion of the Supreme Being was to send for the purpose of emancipating the human race. Those Gnostics who embraced Christianity, regarded the Christ as this Messenger, an exalted *Æon*, who, being in some manner united to the man Jesus, put an end to the dominion of the *δημιουργος*, and restored the souls of men to communion with God. It was natural for the Christian Gnostics who had received a Jewish education to follow the steps of Philo, and the general sense of their countrymen, in giving the name *λογος* to the *δημιουργος*; and as *ἄριστος* was understood from the beginning of our Lord's ministry to be the Greek word equivalent to the Jewish name Messiah, there

came to be, in their system, a direct opposition between *Χεῖστος* and *λογος*. *Λογος* was the maker of the world: *Χεῖστος* was the *Æon* sent to destroy the tyranny of *λογος*.

One of the first teachers of this system was Cerinthus. We have not any particular account of all the branches of his system: and it is possible that we may ascribe to him some of those tenets by which later sects of Gnostics were discriminated. But we have authority for saying that the general principle of the Gnostic scheme was openly taught by Cerinthus before the publication of the Gospel of John. The authority is that of Irenæus, a bishop who lived in the second century, who in his youth had heard Polycarp, the disciple of the Apostle John, and who retained the discourses of Polycarp in his memory till his death. There are yet extant of the works of Irenæus, five books which he wrote against heresies, one of the most authentic and valuable monuments of theological erudition. In one place of that work he says, that Cerinthus taught in Asia that the world was not made by the Supreme God, but by a certain power very separate and far removed from the Sovereign of the Universe, and ignorant of his nature.* In another place, he says, that John the Apostle wished, by his Gospel, to extirpate the error which had been spread among men by Cerinthus;† and Jerome, who lived in the fourth century, says that John wrote his gospel, at the desire of the Bishops of Asia, against Cerinthus and other heretics, and chiefly against the doctrines of the Ebionites, then springing up, who said, that Christ did not exist before he was born of Mary.‡

From laying these accounts together, it appears to have been the tradition of the Christian Church, that John, who lived to a great age, and who resided at Ephesus, in pro-consular Asia, was moved by the growth of the Gnostic heresies, and by the solicitations of the Christian teachers, to bear his testimony to the truth in writing, and particularly to recollect those discourses and actions of our Lord, which might furnish the clearest refutation of the persons who denied his pre-existence. This tradition is a key to a great part of his gospel. Matthew, Mark, and Luke, had given a detail of those actions of Jesus which are the evidences of his divine mission: of those events in his life upon earth which are most interesting to the human race: and of those moral discourses in which the wisdom, the grace, and the sanctity of the Teacher, shine with united lustre. Their whole narration implies that Jesus was more than man. But as it is distinguished by a beautiful simplicity which adds very much to their credit as historians, they have not, with the exception of a few incidental expressions, formally stated the conclusion that Jesus was more than man, but have left the Christian world to draw it for themselves from the facts narrated, or to receive it by the teaching and the writings of the Apostles. John, who was preserved by God to see this conclusion, which had been drawn by the great body of Christians, and had been established in the Epistles, denied by different heretics, brings forward, in the form of a history of Jesus, a view of his exalted character, and draws our attention particularly to the

* Iren. contra Hær. lib. iii. cap. xi. 1.

† Id. lib. i. xxvi. 1.

‡ Jerome De Vit. Illust. cap. ix.

truth of that which had been denied. When you come to analyze the gospel of John, you will find that the first eighteen verses contain the positions laid down by the Apostle, in order to meet the errors of Cerinthus; that these positions, which are merely affirmed in the introduction, are proved in the progress of the gospel, by the testimony of John the Baptist, and by the words and the actions of our Lord; and that after the proof is concluded by the declaration of Thomas, who, upon being convinced that Jesus had risen, said to him, "my Lord, and my God," John sums up the amount of his gospel in these few words: "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God," *i. e.* that Jesus and the Christ are not distinct persons, and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The Apostle does not condescend to mention the name of Cerinthus, because that would have preserved, as long as the world lasts, the memory of a name which might otherwise be forgotten. But although there is dignity and propriety in omitting the mention of his name, it was necessary, in laying down the positions that were to meet his errors, to adopt some of his words, because the Christians of those days could not so readily have applied the doctrine of the Apostle to the refutation of those heresies which Cerinthus was spreading among them, if they had not found in the exposition of that doctrine some of the terms in which the heresy was delivered: and as the chief of these terms, *λογος*, which Cerinthus applied to an inferior spirit, was equivalent to a phrase in common use among the Jews, the word of Jehovah, and was probably borrowed from thence, John, by his use of *λογος*, rescues it from the degraded use of Cerinthus, and restores it to a sense corresponding to the dignity of the Jewish phrase.

You will perceive from this induction the fitness with which the Apostle John introduces this word *λογος*, although it had not been used by the other Evangelists who wrote before the errors of Cerinthus. You may think it strange that *λογος*, which is announced with such solemnity at the beginning, does not occur again in this gospel. But the reason is suggested by the introduction itself. John has said in the 14th verse, *ὁ λογος σαξ̄ς̄ εγενετο*, and he has inserted Jesus Christ in the 17th verse as the name of the man who was the Word made flesh. Our Lord was *λογος* in the beginning. But during his ministry upon earth, his name was properly Jesus Christ; and John might suppose that every reader who was acquainted with his introduction would understand by that name, as often as it occurred, the same person whom he had there called *λογος*. But although this name could not with propriety occur in a history of the man Christ Jesus, it is found in the beginning of the first Epistle of John, which, like his gospel, was opposed to the errors of Cerinthus. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, *περι του λογου της ζωης*, that declare we unto you." And in one of those sublime descriptions of the person of our Saviour, in his glorified state, which are found in the book of Revelation, this name is directly applied to him. "And he was clothed with a vesture dipt in blood; and his name is called the Word of God," *ὁ λογος του Θεου*. Rev. xix. 13. If the book of Revelation was written, as there has always appeared to me great reason to suppose, before the gospel of

John, this direct application of ὁ λόγος to our Saviour, would render it easy for the Christians to understand the meaning of this introduction.

After having gone at such length into the reason of the use of the word λόγος, which is the only real difficulty in this passage, I shall easily deduce the proposition for the sake of which I quoted it, that Jesus created the world. Observe then, that ἐν ἀρχῇ necessarily brings to our minds the first words of Genesis, ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ Θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν; and that both by this obvious reference to a well-known passage, and by what is said in the third verse, πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, ἐν ἀρχῇ must be understood to mean a time before any thing was made. The Apostle asserts that, at this time, ἐν ἀρχῇ, the Word was. He does not say, ἐγένετο, was made, but ἦν, existed; and that the Word existed, not in a state of distance, but πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, at, or with God; not in a state of inferiority, but Θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. This last clause is properly rendered, "the Word was God." It is common in the Greek language to distinguish the subject of a proposition from the predicate, by prefixing the article to the subject, and giving no article to the predicate. Examples of this will be found in Dr. Campbell's Commentary, and will occur to those who are familiar with the New Testament in the original. John iv. 24; xvii. 10.

To draw the attention of the Christians to the error of Cerinthus, the second position is repeated in the second verse, ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν; and then after this explicit repeated affirmation of his original dignity, it is added, πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο. It is not said that all other things were made by him, as if he was one created being. But πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο; and, according to the manner of this apostle, which abounds in repetition, and is here peculiarly fitted to meet the error of Cerinthus, it is added, χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονε, which marks strongly that his creating power extended to all parts of the universe. "In him," says the apostle, "was the life of men." Not only the great objects of nature were formed by him, but every individual being, every animal, derived existence from him. When he came to enlighten the world which he had made, he came εἰς τὰ ἰδία, to his own dominion, and those who did not receive him were οἱ ἰδιοὶ, his own subjects. According to the system of the Gnostics, the Christ, the light of the world, came into the territory of another, to emancipate men from the tyranny of their maker. But here original creation and future illumination are expressly ascribed to the same person, who being before all things with God, in the beginning made, and at a subsequent period enlightened, the world. I have only further to remark, that λόγος and μορφή, which, in the system of some of the Gnostics, were different Æons, are in this passage the same with Jesus Christ.

Having thus easily attained the proposition, which this passage was adduced to prove, I shall not have occasion to occupy time in refuting the two other interpretations which it has received. The one is the old Socinian interpretation, according to which, Jesus is called λόγος merely because he revealed or spoke the will of God to man; and the first three verses receive the following paraphrase. "In the beginning of the gospel, there was a man, who, being the revealer of God's will, was called ὁ λόγος, who was with God, being taken up to heaven after his birth, that he might there learn what he was to

teach to others; and who received, after his resurrection, the title of God, in virtue of the powers conferred upon him, and the office to which he was exalted. By this person the gospel dispensation was established, and without him no part of the world was reformed." According to this interpretation, it is supposed, without evidence, that the man Jesus was taken up to heaven; *Εν αετι*, contrary to its obvious meaning, is applied to the beginning of the gospel: the phrase *Θεος ην ο λογος* is considered as equivalent to this proposition, which appears to be directly opposite, the man who was not God, is now made God; and expressions which, by the analogy and use of the Greek language, denote that things were brought into being, are explained of a reformation of their state.

But, besides all these reasons suggested by the words themselves, the history which I have given of the term *λογος*, is a clear refutation of this forced construction. For *λογος*, or its equivalent in the Chaldee, being, at the time when this gospel was written, commonly applied to a person who made the world, John unavoidably misled his readers, if he gave that name to a man who did not exist before he was born of Mary, and said of that man bearing this name, that all things were made by him, when he only meant that all things were reformed by him.

This Socinian interpretation is generally abandoned, even by those who deny the pre-existence of Jesus; and they have adopted in place of it, the old Sabellian interpretation. *Λογος* signifies reason as well as speech; *ratio mente concepta*, and *ratio enunciativa*. If it be translated in this place reason, the words of John will bear a striking allusion to a remarkable passage in the eighth chapter of the book of Proverbs. Wisdom thus speaks, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth. When he prepared the heavens, I was there; when he appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by him, as one brought up with him." Solomon, says Mr. Lindsey, represents Wisdom as a person dwelling with God, beloved by him, present with him, attending upon him in all his works of creation; and so John says, in the beginning reason or wisdom was with God, *i. e.* God was complete in wisdom before he made any manifestation of himself to his creatures; and all things were made by reason, *i. e.* were created according to the most perfect wisdom; and reason was made flesh, *i. e.* the same divine wisdom which had appeared from the beginning in the creation of the world, was communicated in large measure to the man Jesus Christ, and residing in him became visible to us.

When you judge of this interpretation, you will carry along with you, that all the Christian writers, from the earliest times, apply the description of Wisdom in the eighth chapter of Proverbs, to Christ. It is quoted and argued upon in this light; and both those who held that Christ was God, and those who held that he was a creature, defended their opinions by particular expressions in this passage. To us who enjoy the revelation of the gospel, every fact of that description appears most apposite to Christ. The true doctrine of the gospel respecting the person of Christ, seems to have been anticipated by his

illustrious predecessor; and John, by the manifest similarity of some expressions in this passage to expressions in the description of Wisdom, appears to give his sanction to this interpretation of the meaning of Solomon. It is not, however, in my opinion, probable that any person who had not our advantages, would have found the person of Christ in this description; and if you lay out of your mind what you know of Christ, and attend merely to the poetical strain of the first nine chapters of the book of Proverbs, you will probably be disposed to consider the passage in the eighth chapter as a beautiful and well-supported instance of *prosopopœia*. But, allowing what no person can certainly know, that Solomon meant nothing more in that passage than to personify the divine attribute of wisdom, this does not afford the most distant reason for imagining that John also personifies reason. For observe the difference of the cases. The *prosopopœia* of Solomon is in the midst of other passages of a like kind; and there is no part of it inconsistent with those rules which are not of modern invention, but are essential to the nature and the beauty of this figure. But the *prosopopœia* in this place, if there be one, is introduced abruptly, without preparation, at the beginning of a plain history. It is executed in so inartificial a manner, that words and phrases perpetually occurring in the passage destroy the illusion, and require a great effort of imagination to recal it. Reason, one attribute of the Deity, is called the only begotten, as if he had no other. Reason is called a man to whom another man bore witness; and instead of σοφία, the word used by the Septuagint in that personification which John is supposed to imitate, he introduces, and applies to the man of whom he speaks λόγος, a term applied at the very time of his writing to a person different from God, and inferior to him. To consider John, therefore, as meaning here a personification of the divine attribute of wisdom, is to suppose that he employs a misplaced and ill-supported figure of speech on purpose to mislead his readers; that when he intended to say, Jesus was a man in whom the wisdom of God the maker of all things dwelt, he used language which, to the persons living in those days, and to all who study that language, cannot fail to convey the impression, that this man was a being who existed before any thing was made, and who created the world.

SECTION II.

COL. i. 15—18.

THE Apostle, in reminding the Christians at Colosse, amidst the sufferings to which their faith might expose them, of the grounds of thankfulness which it afforded, is led into one of those digressions which are common in his writings. He had been speaking of that redemption through the blood of Christ, which is the fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion. The redemption suggests to him the dignity and character of the ransomer. He expatiates upon these topics for a few verses, and then returns to the point from which he had set out. The digression, although it appears to interrupt the

course of his argument, promotes most effectually the great design of his Epistle, because it serves to satisfy the Colossians, that the Author of the new religion was qualified for the office which he assumed, and that their faith in him, without any aid from Jewish ceremonies, was able to save them. This digression is contained in the 15th, 16th, 17th, and 18th verses of the first chapter.

I shall first give that interpretation of these verses, which seems to arise out of the words themselves; and I shall next comment upon another interpretation which they have received.

‘Ὁς ἐστὶν εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ αὐρατοῦ. It is proper to take along with this expression, two corresponding phrases in Heb. i. 3.—‘Ὁς ὡν ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης, καὶ χαράκτης τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ. All the three are highly figurative, as the whole language in which we presume to speak of the Almighty necessarily must be. But attention to the point in which the three images coincide may assist us in understanding every one of them. *Εἰκὼν* is a likeness or portrait, representing the features of a person, the expression and air of his countenance; *ἀπαύγασμα*, that which shines forth from a ray, a bright ray of his glory. The expression is probably borrowed from the book of Wisdom, vii. 25, where Wisdom is called ἀπορροια τῆς τοῦ παντοκράτορος δόξης ἐκλιγμένης, ἀπαύγασμα φωτὸς αἰδίου, “a pure ray flowing from the glory of the Almighty, the brightness of the everlasting light.” As light, says Dionysius of Alexandria, who wrote before the Council of Nice, is known by its shining forth, so οὐτος αἰεὶ τοῦ φωτός, δηλὸν ὡς ἐστὶν αἰεὶ τὸ ἀπαύγασμα. On this expression was grounded an argument for the eternity and consubstantiality of the Son, his being always with the Father, and of the same nature. *Χαράκτης*, from *χαράσσω*, *imprimo*, a stamp, an impression, as that by which the figure engraved on a seal is truly represented in wax. *τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ*. I must warn you that the word *ὑπόστασις*, which our translators have rendered Person, does not, either by its etymology, or by its use in the days of the Apostle, necessarily convey that distinction which we now mark, when we speak of the three Persons in the Godhead. For the first three centuries, *οὐσία* and *ὑπόστασις* were used promiscuously, and it was in the progress of controversy, that men being obliged to speak with more precision, and to define their terms, came to appropriate *ὑπόστασις* to denote a person, while *οὐσία* signified that nature or substance which different persons might have in common. It would therefore have been more correct, because more agreeable to the language of the Apostle’s time, to have rendered *χαράκτης τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ*, the express image, or representation of his substance, *i. e.* of his essential attributes. It is always unsafe to build an argument upon figurative expressions; and, until we be further advanced in this inquiry, we are not warranted to say whether these three phrases ought to receive that strict interpretation which renders them descriptive of the nature of Christ. This much they certainly imply, that the glory of the divine perfections was most accurately reflected and exhibited to man in Jesus Christ. They may imply that this accurate exhibition arises from a similitude, or sameness of nature; and if plain declarations of Scripture shall authorize us to affix this meaning to these figurative phrases, you will recollect that it is such as they seem easily to bear.

Πρῶτοτοχος πάσης κτίσεως. The word *πρῶτοτοχος* is applied by Homer, Il.

xvii. 5, to an animal who, for the first time brought forth young ; *πρωτοτοκος κινηη, ου πριν ειδυια τοκοιο, non prius experta partum*. If we followed the analogy of the passage, we should translate *πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως*, he who first brought forth the whole creation, which would render it equivalent to a phrase, Rev. iii. 14, where Jesus calls himself *ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτισεως του Θεου*. *Αρχή*, in the language of ancient philosophy, denoted an efficient cause, that which gave a beginning to other things, a principle or source of existence. According to this received sense of the word, *αρχὴ τῆς κτισεως του Θεου* means more than our English translation conveys,—the beginning of the creation of God ; it is he who gave a beginning to, produced, the creation of God. But there are several reasons which prevent us from giving *πρωτοτοκος τας κτισεως* the sense which renders it equivalent to this true meaning of *αρχὴ τῆς κτισεως*. 1. Although *πρωτοτοκος*, like other compounds of *τετοκα*, occurs in an active sense, there is no instance of its governing a case of the word, denoting the thing brought forth ; and that case, if there were one governed by it, would not be the genitive. 2. In other places of the New Testament, and in the 18th verse of this chapter, *πρωτοτοκος* must be translated in a passive sense, not the first who brought forth, but the first who was brought forth. 3. If you translate it here in an active sense, then the 16th verse only repeats in a multitude of words that proposition of which it professes to give a reason. He brought forth the whole creation ; “for all things were created by him.” For these reasons, Christian writers from the earliest times have understood this expression in a passive sense ; and you will understand the meaning which they affix to it, from the commentary of Justin Martyr in the second century ; *ὁ λογος, προ των ποιηματων οντων και γενομενος*. And, *πρωτοτοκον του Θεου, και προ παντων των κτισματων*. By their use of the preposition *προ* in explaining this word, it appears that they would have translated it in English, born or begotten before every creature ; and this method of rendering the superlative is agreeable to the expression in John, *πρωτος μου ην*, he was before me, *i. e.* in comparison with me, he was the first ; and it is analogous to several other expressions that occur in the best Greek writers. I mention only one, suggested by Dr. Clarke, from Euripides ; *ουτις αλλη δυστυχεστατη γυνη εμου περικεν* ; there is no other woman, who, considered in comparison with me, deserves the name of the most unhappy. So here, Jesus, in respect of *πασης κτισεως*, is *πρωτοτοκος*, the first born, *i. e.* he was born before it. *Πασης κτισεως* is rendered in our translation, “every creature.” According to the analogy of the Greek language, if *κτιζω* means *creo*, *κτις* is *creatio*, the act of creating, and *κτισμα* *creatura*, the thing created. It is true that this distinction is not invariably observed ; for as *πρωτος* often denotes an action, a thing done, so *κτις* sometimes in the New Testament must be translated a creature. But there are several passages where it must be understood in its original import, as Rev. iii. 14, already quoted, and Rom. i. 20, *τα ωρατα αυτου απο κτι-εως κοσμου, τοις ποιημασι τουτοιεα καθοραται*. The English would have come nearer the Greek if the word creation had been used here instead of creature ; and if, at the same time, the true force of *πρωτοτοκος* had been expressed by the insertion of the preposition, so as to make the whole clause stand thus, begotten before the whole creation, an inconvenience would have been avoided which arises from the present translation.

To a careless reader, indeed to every one who is not capable of looking into the original, these words, first-born of every creature, seem to convey that Jesus is of the same rank and order with other creatures, distinguished from them only in seniority; and some Arians have urged this phrase in proof of the leading position of their system. But the words, if closely examined, really contain a refutation of that position which they appear to support. Had it been said, *πρωτοκτιστος πασης κτισεως*, this would have implied that Jesus was a *κτισμα*, like all other beings. But the word *πρωτοτοκος* separates him from all the *κτισματα*. The act of producing them is *κρετις*. But he is *τεχθεις*, derived, produced from the Father in a different manner, before any of them were made. It is not intimated in the word *πρωτοτοκος*, or in the phrase used by John *εν αρχη*, at what time the Son was thus produced, whether immediately before the creation, or from eternity. That must be gathered from other passages of Scripture. All that we learn here is, that the existence of the Son of God was prior to that of any created being, and that the manner of his being produced is marked by a word different from creation.

In verse sixteenth, the Apostle mentions an infallible proof of that which we have given as the amount of *πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως*. The Son of God was born before the whole creation, for every thing that can be conceived as a part of the creation was made by him. *Ὅτι εν αυτω εκτισθη τα παντα τα εν τοις ουρανοις και τα επι της γης, τα δεατα και τα αορατα, ιτε δυνουοι, ιτε κυριότητες, ιτε αρχαι, ιτε εξουσιαι τα παντα δι αυτου και εις αυτον εκτισται.* The proposition is enunciated in such a manner as to draw our attention very strongly to the universality of it. There is first the same division as in the first book of Genesis. *εν αρχη εποησεν ο θεος τον ορισμον και την γην.* Here *τα παντα τα εν τοις ουρανοις και τα επι της γης.* And with the same anxiety to mark the universality of the proposition, which suggested the repetition that we found in John, this Apostle adds, *τα δεατα και τα αορατα.* We deduce the propriety of this addition from what we know of the tenets of the Gnostics. They said that the visible world was made by the *δημιουργος*, an Æon of inferior rank; but that the invisible world, all the different orders of angels, were emanations from the Supreme mind. To them, therefore, *παντα τα εν τοις ουρανοις και τα επι της γης*, might seem only to imply that the celestial bodies and this lower world were the work of Jesus. But *τα αορατα*, joined to *τα δεατα*, has no meaning unless it comprehends the angels; and that no order of angels might be conceived to be exempted, the Apostle adds several names, all of which, being introduced by the particles *ιτε*, appear to be partitions of *τα αορατα*. We cannot explain the reason why these particular names are chosen. But we naturally infer, from their being chosen, that they refer to a system and a language with regard to angels that was then known. It was one of the doctrines of heathen philosophy, that between God, the Father of spirits, and man, there were many intermediate spirits, who had particular provinces allotted them in the government of the universe; and this doctrine was readily embraced by those who wished to incorporate heathen philosophy with Rabbinical learning. For it accorded with the views given in the Old Testament of the dispensation of the law which was ordained by angels, and with the whole of that intercourse which the Almighty condescended to maintain with his chosen

people. We read in Scripture of Michael an archangel, and of a chief prince, of cherubim and seraphim, all which gives us reason to suppose that there are different orders amongst the spirits who excel in strength. Learned men have collected from the most ancient writings of the Jews that are extant, and from the mention which other authors incidentally make of their tenets, that they not only agreed in opinion with the heathen as to the superintendence of angels, but that many of them formed systems with regard to the orders and offices of these spirits, gave names to the different orders, and paid them a degree of homage corresponding to the opinion entertained of their nature. To these opinions and practices the Apostle manifestly refers, Col. ii. 18. And in accommodation to the systems formed upon this subject, he says here, that the angels, all of whom are withdrawn from the eyes of mortals, were made by the Son, whatever be their rank, implied in *δεσποται*; or power, in *κυριοκραταις*, *from* *κυριος*; or extent of dominion, in *αρχαι*; or liberty allowed them in exercising their power, in *εξουσαι*, *from* *εξουσι*, *licet*. All *εν αυτω εκτισθη*, and *δι αυτου εκτισται*. These two expressions are equivalent. They were made through the exertion of a power residing in him. But *εις αυτον* implies more; *εις* marks the point to which an object tends; and the use of it in this place suggests that Jesus did not create all things for the purpose of ministering to the pleasure or glory of another, but that as they proceeded from him, so they refer to him as their end. It is equivalent to an expression in the book of Revelation, i. 8. *Εγω ειμι το Α και το Ω, αρχη και τελος, λεγει ο Κυριος*. It deserves your particular notice, that by the use of this preposition *εις*, one of the forms of expression, which, in other places, seems to be appropriated to the Father, is here applied to the Son. We read, Rom. xi. 36, *εξ αυτου, και δι αυτου, και εις αυτον τα παντα*, and 1 Cor. viii. 6, *Αλλ' ἡμιν εἰς Θεος ὁ πατήρ, ἐξ οὗ τα πάντα, καὶ ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτον. καὶ εἰς Κυριος Ἰησους Χριστος, δι' οὗ τα παντὶ καὶ ἡμεῖς δι' αὐτον*. *Ἡμεῖς εἰς αὐτον* is not, "we in him," as in our translation, but "we to him," or "for him." The distinction made by the Apostle to the Corinthians, seems to be removed, when it is said, *παντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτον εκτισται*.

Verse 17th. *Και αὐτος ἐστὶ πρὸ πάντων*. The Apostle may be considered as repeating the amount of the expression *πρωτοτοκος πασης κτισεως*, that the existence of Jesus was prior to that of any created being, a repetition made with propriety, after the thing affirmed by him has been proved, by his being the Creator of all things; or he may be considered as saying something new. There are two circumstances which lead us to understand him so. 1. The import of *αὐτος*, a pronoun which is more proper to introduce a new proposition than to repeat a former one. 2. The tense of *ειμι*, which intimates not what Jesus was before the creation, but what he is now.

These circumstances render the first clause of the seventeenth verse an expression of pre-eminence. He who existed before all, and who created all, now stands before all, in a higher rank than any created being. *Και τα πάντα εν αυτω συνεστηκε*; and in him they consist, being continually preserved by his agency. Paul has expressed creation fully in the sixteenth verse. And the pronoun *αυτω* giving notice that something further is to be said of the same person, it is most natural to translate *συνεστηκεν*, according to classical use, by preservation. This

is perfectly agreeable to the passage in Aristotle. *Αρχαίος μὲν τις λόγος καὶ πατριός ἐστι πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις, ὡς ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ τὰ πάντα, καὶ διὰ Θεοῦ ἡμῖν συνέστηκε· οὐδεμία δὲ φύσις, αὐτὴ καθ' ἑαυτὴν ἀνταγκῆς ἐξημώθεισα τῆς ἐκ τούτου σωτηρίας.** And also to an expression of Paul, Acts xvii. 28, where Paul shows an acquaintance with the Athenian poets. The quotation has been referred both to Aratus and Cleanthes.

Thus, then, by an analysis of these three verses, we have found a learned Jew employing the language suggested by the writers of his own country and the philosophers of the times, as the most proper for expressing that Jesus, the Son of God, is the creator and the preserver of all.

It cannot be denied that Jesus Christ is the person here spoken of. For there is no other antecedent to the relative *ὅς*, but *υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ*; and as the eighteenth verse, by its meaning, must be applied to Jesus Christ, the first-born from the dead, there is as clear an intimation as can well be given, that the verses intervening between the fifteenth and the eighteenth, apply to him also. But these intervening verses, according to the analysis that has been given of them, are inconsistent with the first opinion concerning the person of Christ. And, therefore, those who hold that opinion, being unable to apply these verses to any other, are obliged to bring forward a system of interpretation, according to which they may, in consistency with their opinion, be applied to Christ. As this system is employed in the explication of several other passages, and is a characteristic mark perpetually recurring in the writings of those who are called Socinians, I shall take this opportunity of laying it before you fully, with the grounds upon which it is rested by themselves.

The gospel is represented in Scripture as making a complete change upon the character of all who embrace it in faith. The opinions, the sentiments, the affections, the desires, the whole conduct of those who were converted from the superstition and gross vices of heathenism became different. They put off the old man which was corrupt, and they put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. This total change, which restores the image of God upon the soul of man, is called in different places by St. Paul, *καὶνὴ κτίσις*; a significant figure, the meaning of which becomes more obvious, if you translate it literally a new creation, rather than a new creature. *Εἰ τις ἐν Χριστῷ, καὶνὴ κτίσις· τὰ ἀρχαία παρῆλθεν, ἰδοὺ γέγονε καὶνὰ πάντα.* 2 Cor. v. 17. And the apostle, in an epistle to the Ephesians, written at the same time as this Epistle, joining himself, according to his usual manner, with the converts, says, *Αὐτοῦ γὰρ ἐσμὲν ποιεῖμα, κτισθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐπὶ ἐργοῖς ἀγαθοῖς.* Eph. ii. 10. But the figurative language of Scripture does not stop here. The Jewish prophets were accustomed to describe future events relative to the fall of kingdoms, or their restoration, by images drawn from the Mosaic account of the creation. I will shake the heavens and the earth, is explained by Haggai to mean, I will overthrow the throne of kings. That I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, means, in Isaiah, the deliverance and restoration of the Jews.—In conformity to this frequent language of ancient prophecy, the

* Arist. Opera, vol. i. Lib. de Mundo, ch. vi. 375. Ed. Lug.

evangelical prophet Isaiah paints those blessed events which were to be the consequences of Christ's coming, the conversion from idolatry, the assurance of pardon, the practice of righteousness, and the union of Jews and Gentiles under one head, by these words: "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth: And the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."* There was a particular reason for the apostles of our Lord adopting and extending this image of Isaiah, because, in the interval between the days of the prophet and their days, the early opinions with regard to the different orders of spiritual beings had been formed, by a mixture of Jewish tradition and heathen philosophy, into a regular system. It was believed that those angels, who had rebelled against God, exercised a malignant influence over the minds and bodies of men; and that the heathen were subject to the rule of the prince of those spirits, who is styled in Scripture, "the prince of this world."† But Jesus "was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."‡ He himself says, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."§ He gave his disciples power over evil spirits: and he is said to be now "set in the heavenly places far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject to him."|| The gospel dispensation, then, is represented in Scripture under the idea of a new creation of men: a regulation of the heavenly communities, a reformation of all things, *πανταγγενεσια*: and all this is only a figurative language, according to the style of ancient prophecy, describing in a manner the most likely to convince the understandings, and to affect the imaginations of those who were addressed, the infinite importance of the gospel, the power exerted in its propagation, its intended universality, and the efficacy with which it establishes truth and virtue in the mind of man.

According to this general system of interpretation, which is applied to many passages of Scripture, the three verses in question are thus understood. The Son of God, under whose rule you converts are now placed, is the representative of the invisible God, the Lord, (the word first-born is conceived to be adopted instead of Lord, in reference to that right which primogeniture conveys amongst men,) the Lord of the new creation; Jews and Gentiles being regenerated into one mass by that doctrine which he first preached. For the effects of his religion may be represented under the figure of a new creation of all things, there being not only a reformation of the world of mankind, but a subjection to Christ of those heavenly powers who, according to Jewish notions, formerly bore rule on earth. The terms in which these powers are here spoken of were found in Jewish traditions. But it matters not how far the traditions were well-founded. Whether the powers were real or imaginary, the style used would convey to those whom the apostle is addressing, the same exalted idea of the power of Christ. And the whole image is introduced merely to paint the excellency of the gospel above all former dispensations.

I have endeavoured, in the exposition of this system of interpretation, to do justice to the principles upon which it rests. And I have

* Isaiah lxx. 17.

§ Luke x. 18.

† John xiv. 30.

|| Ephes. i. 20, 21. 1 Peter iii. 22.

‡ 1 John iii. 8.

explained it, not according to the rude form which it first bore, but with all the improvements and corrections to which modern Socinians have been driven by a multitude of objections.

Before we proceed to examine particularly the application of this system to the passage before us, there are two general observations which I wish to premise, the one concerning the use of allegory in Scripture; and the other concerning the interpretation of allegory.—

1. It is allowed that allegory was a favourite method of conveying truth in ancient times, and that while the vulgar rest in the literal sense, an enlargement of understanding is discovered in apprehending the further meaning. There are allegories of different kinds in the Old Testament. There are many passages, such as Psalm lxxii., which apply, in a certain sense, to events that fell under the prophet's observation, but the full explication of which is found in the dispensation of the gospel. This arose naturally from the character of the Old Testament, which was a preparatory dispensation, looking forward in all its points to the grace and truth that were to come by Jesus Christ. When grace and truth did come, this reason for the use of allegory ceased. For the gospel being the last dispensation, it has not, like the law, to give intimation during its existence, of an approaching change. Yet still the general uses of figurative language continue; and it may be expected that the writers of the New Testament, educated in reverence for the books of the ancient prophets, and full of their images, would not lay them aside entirely in describing the events which those images had been employed to foretell. Hence an acquaintance with the figurative language of the Old Testament is of great service in expounding the New; and the exact correspondence between the two dispensations may be so employed as to make them throw light upon one another.

2. With regard to the interpretation of the allegories which are found in Scripture, I have to observe, that the same propensity to allegorize, or to find hidden spiritual meanings in plain expressions, which is discovered by some commentators upon Homer and other ancient writers, has been the occasion of very great abuse in the exposition of Scripture. From the days of Origen to the present times, the inspired writings have been brought into ridicule, or have had the truths in them perverted by the intemperate exercise of this propensity. In mystical authors, the gospel has been made to assume a form which disfigures its simplicity, and alters its character: and by those writers, whose principles lead them to banish out of Christianity every doctrine that is not easily comprehended, the language of that religion is often rendered enigmatical. For, as has been pointedly said of them, the Socinians take mystery out of the doctrine of Scripture, where it is venerable, and they place it in the phrase of Scripture, where it is repugnant to God's sincerity. The recollection of these abuses should make you receive with some suspicion every allegorical exposition of Scripture. And in judging of it, it becomes you to recollect those rules concerning the proper introduction of figurative language, which have been dictated by good sense and enlarged observation, and which are commonly applied in reading other writers, both as a test of their good taste, and as a method of attaining their true meaning. You have direct notice from some expressions in a

passage, that the words are to be understood in a figurative sense. Or you find, upon examining them closely, that there is a defect in the meaning if you understand them literally. Or the context intimates, that a passage which appeared when considered singly to be literal, is really figurative. There does not occur to me any other way, in which you can be warranted to give a passage of an inspired author a sense different from that which the words naturally bear; and if none of these directions are given us in this place, the Socinian interpretation of these three verses must be considered as an unnecessary and licentious introduction of allegory.

There is not any expression in these verses which necessarily suggests a figurative sense. All the nominatives introduced as distributives of *τα παντα*, are words generally used in the language of those times to denote created objects; and *κτιζω* with its derivatives, is the verb commonly used in the New Testament to denote creation. *Αξιός ει, Κυριε, λαβειν την δοξαν—ὅτι σὺ ἐκτίσας τὰ πάντα, καὶ διὰ τὸ θελημα σου εἰσι, καὶ ἐκτίσθησαν.* Rev. iv. 11, *ἀπο κτίσεως κόσμου.* Rom. i. 20. It is true that *κτιζω*, and *κτίσις*, are employed to denote reformation. But some expression is always joined with them in these passages to give notice that they are transferred from their original meaning. When Paul uses *κτίσις* in this sense, 2 Cor. v. 17, Gal. vi. 15, he prefixes the epithet *καινη*, which is probably borrowed from the Septuagint translation of that passage in Isaiah, which runs in our Bibles, “I create new heavens and a new earth.” *Ἔσται ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ καινὴ*; and when he uses the verb *κτιζω* in the same figurative sense, the intimation is still more direct, *κτισθεντες ἐπὶ ἐργοῖς ἀγαθοῖς*, Ephesians ii. 10. In these places, the writer plainly leads us from the literal to the figurative sense. Here there is no such intimation; and the first appearance of the words does not suggest any reason why we may not translate them literally. When we examine them according to this literal translation, we do not find such a defect in the meaning as might warrant our rejecting it and substituting a figurative sense in its place. We believe, by the light of nature, that all the things here spoken of, *ἐκτίσται*, were called out of nothing. The new information given us is, that this was done *ἐν αὐτῷ*, by the Son of God. But it is a very bold speculation to reject the obvious meaning of a proposition contained in the gospel, merely because it gives new information; and those who believe the inspiration of Scripture will require some other reason to be assigned before they find themselves at liberty to depart from the obvious meaning; more especially as they observe that the attempt to bring plain truth out of the words in this place, by such departure, is very unsuccessful. You cannot conceive a reason for so particular an enumeration as is here given in the partitives of *τα παντα*, unless the action meant by the word *ἐκτίσται* extended to all the things enumerated. But that action cannot be reformation; for with regard to the phrase *τα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς*, even although you restrict its meaning to men, the inhabitants of earth, we know that many have died without hearing the gospel, and that many who do hear it are not the better for it: and with regard to the other phrase, *τα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ*, we have no ground for thinking that the character of the evil angels, revealed in Scripture, was in the least improved by our Saviour’s coming, or that the character of the good angels stood

in need of any amendment: and thus the notion conveyed by the phrase *καὶνὴ κτίσις*, does not apply to a great part of the *τα ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς*, or to any of the *τα ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ*. The modern Socinians, aware of the force of this objection, have substituted in place of *καὶνὴ κτίσις*, or rather have added to it what they call regulation. The evil angels, they say, are stripped of their power by Jesus, and he is placed at the head of the angelic host. But this is a figurative use of the word *κτίζω* not warranted by the other expressions in the Epistles of Paul, where a new creation is meant; and if it be adopted here, by departing from the plain literal sense of *ἐπιθεῖν*, you are obliged in the same sentence to give it two figurative meanings, one reformation, applied to those inhabitants of earth who become by the gospel “the workmanship of God, created unto good works; the other regulation or subjection, applied to all those beings whose character is not changed by the gospel. It is plain then, that as the words themselves do not necessarily suggest a figurative sense, nothing is gained in point of easy or significant interpretation by forcing it upon them. But perhaps the context will justify it. In an extended allegory, the first sentence is generally obscure. But the primary and secondary sense are gradually unfolded by the art of the composition; and, when we look back to the beginning after having arrived at the end, the whole becomes clear. Here the case is totally different. In the eighteenth verse, Jesus is styled “the head of the body of the church,” *i. e.* of those who were rescued by his blood out of the slavery of sin, and translated into his kingdom. The same word, *πρωτοτοκος*, which had been applied to him in reference to *πατρὸς κτίσεως*, is there applied to him in reference to *νεκρῶν*, because he was the first that rose, or was brought forth out of the bowels of the earth, never to die any more; and as he was not only before the creation but produced it, so he was not only the first that rose, but also *αἰχμή*, the efficient cause of the resurrection of others. The Head, by rising, gave assurance that the members of the body should in due time be raised also. And thus, as the pronoun *αὐτός* is the natural intimation that something else is to be said about the Person who had been mentioned before, so if you understand the sixteenth and seventeenth verses as expressing a literal creation, there is a striking analogy between the phrases that had been used upon that subject, and the phrases used upon the new subject in the eighteenth verse. And there seems to be a direct notice given, that the subjects are different, by the last clause of the eighteenth verse, *ἵνα γενῇται ἐν πατρὶ αὐτοῦ πρωτότερον*, by which means he might become the first in all things. He was the first in creation, both as existing before all creatures, and as having made them: He became after his death the first also in the scheme for the recovery of the world, because being the first that rose, he is the cause of the resurrection of others. Such is the light which a plain interpretation of the first three verses throws upon the context. If, on the other hand, you understand them figuratively, you are reminded as you advance in the context that the harsh interpretation, which you had been obliged to impose upon the phrases contained in them, is not the true one, because by it you confound these three verses with the eighteenth; you lose the beauty in the analogy of the corresponding

parts, and in the repetition of the word *πρωτοτοκος*; and you destroy entirely the meaning of the last clause of the eighteenth verse.

It appears, then, that according to those rules of interpretation, which a regard to perspicuity or ornament suggests, the Socinian sense of this passage is indefensible; and, therefore, it must be considered in the sense which naturally presents itself to every person who reads it, as a declaration that Jesus Christ is the Creator of the world; a declaration introduced most seasonably in this place, to exalt the dignity of the Author of the Gospel in the eyes of the new converts to that religion.

SECTION III.

Hebrews i.

THE last passage which I mentioned as containing a full declaration that Jesus is the creator of the world, is the first chapter to the Epistle of the Hebrews. I do not mean to give a particular commentary upon all the parts of that chapter, because many of them have no immediate connexion with our present object; but I shall state in general the purport of the apostle's argument, that you may see the propriety and significancy with which the declaration that we seek finds a place in this chapter.

The apostle is writing to Jews, who had embraced the Gospel, in order to furnish them with answers to those objections, which their unbelieving countrymen urged against the new religion. The first source from which the answers are drawn, is the superior dignity of the author of that religion. The law, indeed, was given from Mount Sinai by the ministry of angels; and the succession of prophets who enlightened the Jewish nation were messengers of heaven. But the various manifestations of himself which the Almighty had made in former times, *πολυμερως και πολυτροπως*, cannot claim so high a degree of reverence as that message which, in the last days, the time that had been announced as the conclusion of the law, was brought by a person more glorious than a prophet or an angel: *Ὁν εθηκε κληρονομον παντων, δι ου και τους αιωνας εποισεν*. *Ὅς ων απαντασμα της δοξης, και χαρακτης της ιποστασεως αυτου, φερων τε τα παντα τω ρηματι της δυναμεως αυτου, δι εαυτου καθαρισμοι ποιηταμενος των αμαρτιων ημων, εκαθισεν εν δεξια της μεγαλωσυνης εν υψηλοις*. This is the description given of that person by whom, says the apostle, God in these last days hath spoken to us. When it is said of the King Eternal, *εθηκε κληρονομον*, we must understand this figurative expression in a sense consistent with his unchangeable glory, and such a sense is suggested by the ideas universally annexed to *κληρονομος*. The heir has an interest in the estate more intimate than that of any one person except the proprietor; and he may be intrusted with a degree of authority over it, because it cannot be supposed that he will abuse that which he is to possess. Hence in the old Roman law, *heres* and *dominus* were considered as equivalent terms. "*Pro hærede gerere est pro domino gerere*," says Justinian: and Paul, in allusion to this

maxim of law, says, Gal. iv. 1, "The heir while he is a minor, is under tutors, *κυριος παντων ων.*"

Agreeably to this import of the word *κληρονομος*, Christians of every sect understand the expression here used to mean that God constituted Jesus Lord of all. They agree also that his appointment to this sovereignty was declared to the world at his resurrection. The point upon which they differ is the character of Jesus before this appointment. Those who hold the first opinion concerning his person, that he is *ψελος ανθρωπος*, consider the titles of honour, that are ascribed to him in Scripture, as flowing from his being constituted Lord of all things: and they endeavour to explain the first three verses in such a manner, as that they shall not seem to imply any original dignity of nature. He is called the Son of God, they say, because he is made heir or Lord of all. By him God regulated and reformed the world; or, understanding *αιωνας*, according to the literal import of the word and its use in several places of Scripture, to denote the ages, and considering *δι ου* as equivalent to *δι ου*, they thus paraphrase the last clause of the second verse; for whom, in respect to whom, in order to illustrate whose glory, when he should be constituted Lord of all, God disposed or ordered the ages: *i. e.* the antediluvian, the patriarchal, and the legal ages, all the divine dispensations towards the sons of men. They interpret the first two clauses of the third verse as expressions of that perfect representation of the divine perfections, which appeared in the character of Jesus while he dwelt upon earth. Every one who saw that excellent man in whom the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of God resided, saw the Father also. They apply the clause, upholding all things by the word of his power, to his transactions upon earth, that command over nature which was given him, and all those miracles by which he proved his divine commission, and established that dispensation which, having been opened by his preaching, and sealed by his death, is magnified in the eyes of men by the resurrection of its author, and by their knowing assuredly that he is set on the right hand of the throne of God, having obtained an authority and a rank superior to that of the angels.

There is an apparent consistency in this interpretation which renders it plausible. But when you weigh the several expressions here used, you will find that it is by no means adequate to their natural import. 1. Jesus is called the Son of God, whom he made heir, a construction which implies that he was the Son of God before his appointment to the sovereignty. 2. *δι ου και τους αιωνας εποιησεν*, are words that would not probably suggest to the first readers of this epistle, either by whom God reformed the world, or, by whom he disposed the ages. Some critics have thought the natural translation of them to be, by whom God made the angels, as it is likely that, before this epistle was written, the Gnostics used *οι αιωνες* to mark the multitude of spirits who were emanations from the supreme mind. But although this use of the word might be known to the apostle, we have no reason for thinking that it was at that time so familiar to Christians, that the apostle would choose, without any explication, to introduce it into an epistle written for the purpose of confirming their faith in the Gospel, more especially as another interpretation of these words could not fail readily to occur to their minds. We are told that

οἱ αἰῶνες is equivalent to a Hebrew phrase, which the ancient Jews employed to mark the whole extent of creation, divided by them into three parts, this lower world, the celestial bodies, and the third heavens, or habitation of God. The Greek word αἰών, αἰεὶ ὤν, was applied to the world as marking its duration in contradistinction to the short lives of many of its inhabitants. The word occurs often in the New Testament in this sense; and there is one passage which appears to be decisive of the meaning of this phrase. Heb. xi. 3, πιστεῖ νοοῦμεν κατηγέτισθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας ῥήματι Θεοῦ. If you join to this received use of αἰῶνας, that ἐποίησε is the word used in the Septuagint translation of the first verse of Genesis, and that διὰ is one of the prepositions which we found in the Epistle to the Colossians, expressing the creation of all things by the Son, you will not be inclined to doubt that this clause contains another declaration to the same purpose: and when you so understand it, you see the reason of the particle καὶ being introduced. The Son, whom God did “appoint heir of all, δι’ οὗ καὶ, by whom also,” it is a further information concerning his person, no way implied in the appointment, and its being additional is marked by καὶ, “he made the worlds.” 3. According to this interpretation of δι’ οὗ καὶ τοὺς αἰῶνας ἐποίησε, φέρων τε τὰ πάντα τῷ ῥήματι τῆς δυναμὸς αὐτοῦ, will naturally express his being the preserver and supporter of all things which he created, as the apostle to the Colossians had said, “by him all things consist.” And, 4th, The first two clauses of the third verse, which are equivalent to the expression that we found there, εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου, appear by their form, as well as their meaning, intended to convey additional information concerning the person of the Son, so that the amount of the third verse may be thus stated, the Son, appointed by God the Lord of all, by whom God created the world, who being originally a bright ray of the Father’s glory, and the exact representation of his essence, and supporting without any fatiguing exertion all the things made by him, did in the last days appear to wash away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and having accomplished this work, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

It appears from this review of the first three verses, that besides the simple proposition which the Socinians find in them, that the man by whom God spoke in the last days is now the Lord of all, they contain also further intimation concerning this man, as being the Son of God, by whom he made the world. These further intimations require proof, and they do not admit the same kind of proof with the simple proposition that he is now Lord of all. That was made manifest by the extraordinary gifts with which he endowed the first preachers of his religion, gifts sufficient to prove that all power in heaven and in earth is now given to him, but not sufficient to establish with certainty any conclusion, which extends to his state previous to the time of his receiving that power. As there is thus occasion for proving the further intimations concerning the person of Christ, which we have found in the first three verses, it is natural to look for that proof in the remaining part of the chapter, which seems at first reading to relate to the same subject; and the proof is formally introduced by the fourth verse. Τοσοῦτῳ κρείττων γενομένου τῶν ἀγγέλων. ὅσῳ διαφωτερόν παρ’ αὐτοὺς κεκληρονομήκεν ὄνομα, which may be literally rendered thus: “being as far superior to the angels, as the name which he hath

inherited is more excellent than theirs.” The point to be proved is not that he is now superior to the angels; that is self-evident, if he be Lord of all; but that the name which he has inherited as always belonging to him, and the characters by which he has been announced in the former revelations of God, imply a pre-eminence over the angels corresponding to his present exaltation. This point, a proof of which the train of the apostle’s argument requires, is fully established in the following verses, in the manner most satisfactory to the Hebrews, by a reference to their own Scriptures. I shall just mark the steps of the proof, without staying to illustrate fully the several quotations.

1. He is called the Son of God, with an emphasis which is never applied to any other being. Of the two citations in the fifth verse, the one is taken from Psalm ii. which the Jews considered as a prophecy of the Messiah; the other from a message which the prophet Nathan brought to David, 1 Chron. xvii. 11—14. There is no mention in that message of the Messiah, but there are these words, which point to a greater than Solomon. “And it shall come to pass when thy days be expired, that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons. I will be his Father, and he shall be my Son; and I will settle him in mine house, and in my kingdom for ever.”

2. The Psalmist represents the Son as the object of worship to angels. 6. Ὅταν δὲ πάλιν εἰσαγάγῃ τὸν πρωτοτοκὸν εἰς τὴν οἰκουμένην, λέγει· Καὶ προσκυνήσάτωσαν αὐτῷ πάντες ἄγγελοι Θεοῦ. The repetition of the adverb *πάλιν* is the common method by which the apostle introduces a succession of quotations. It is therefore a very forced construction which has been given to this verse, “When he bringeth again the first begotten, when he raiseth him from the dead.” The command is taken from the Septuagint translation of Psalm xcvii. The psalm appears to relate to God the Father. But we are taught by the authority of the apostle, in this citation, to apply it to the Son. “When God bringeth in the first begotten, *i. e.* when he announceth his coming into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him.”

3. The pre-eminence of the Son over the angels is inferred from the very different language which is employed in relation to the angels and him, *Πρὸς μὲν τοὺς ἀγγέλους λέγει. Πρὸς δὲ τὸν υἱόν·* 7, 8, 9. The angels are spoken of as servants; the Son is addressed by the name of God, as a king, whose throne is everlasting. The quotations are taken from Psalms civ. and xlv. which the Jews were accustomed to apply to the Messiah. Although it be not very much to my present purpose, I cannot avoid mentioning an ingenious criticism on the 7th verse, which is found in Grotius, which was adopted by Dr. Lowth in his elegant book *De Sacrá Poësi Hebræorum*, and is illustrated by Dr. Campbell in one of his critical dissertations. Three authorities so respectable claim our attention. It is not easy to affix any meaning to the seventh verse, which both in this place, and in Psalm civ. is thus rendered, “Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.” But the Hebrew as well as the Greek word for spirits may be translated “winds,” and *ἄγγελος* is the general word for “messenger;” so that the verse admits of a translation most agreeable to the context in Psalm civ. “Who maketh the clouds his chariot,

who walketh upon the wings of the wind; who maketh the winds his messenger, and the flaming fire his servant," *i. e.* who employs wind and fire to accomplish his purposes. This meaning enters most naturally into the Psalm, which celebrates the glory of God as it appears in the material creation, and, if adopted here, contributes very much to the force of the apostle's reasoning, by the improvement which it makes upon the sense of the quotation. "So little sacredness is there in the name Angels, that it is applied in Scripture to inanimate objects, storm, and lightning. But so sacred is the name of the Son, that the Person who bears it is addressed by the Almighty as an everlasting King. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever."

There is one objection to this change which I was very much surprised to find the minute accuracy of Dr. Campbell had omitted to mention. It is contrary to the rule to which I referred when speaking of these words, Θεός ἦν ὁ λόγος, that in Greek the predicate is commonly distinguished from the subject of a proposition by being without the article, more especially when the predicate stands first; *ὃς ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐγένετο*. I doubt not that it was a regard to this rule which led our translators of the Old and New Testament to adopt a dark expression instead of an obvious one. I believe that this distinction between the predicate and the subject of a proposition is observed, with very few exceptions, and much advantage arises from the observance of it. At the same time, as the rule is founded merely upon practice, and not, as far as I know, upon any thing essential to the constitution of the language; and as, in the best writers, anomalous expressions sometimes occur, it does not appear to me that the place of the article in this verse is a sufficient reason for rejecting a translation which is so striking an improvement.

4. The fourth quotation, 10, 11, 12, is taken from Psalm cii. There is not in that psalm any direct mention of the Son of God. But if you admit that the books of the New Testament are inspired, you cannot suppose that the apostle was mistaken in applying these words; and, therefore, the only question is, whether he does apply them to Jesus Christ. The succession of quotations leads you to expect this application, for there would be an abruptness inconsistent both with elegance and perspicuity, if between the third and the fifth quotations, both of which are addressed to the Son, there should be introduced, without any intimation of the change, one addressed to the Father; and all the attempts to establish a connexion made by those who consider it as thus addressed are so forced and unnatural, as to satisfy us that they are mistaken. You may judge of the rest by that attempt which is the latest, and is really the most plausible. Those, then, who consider the 10th, 11th, and 12th verses, as addressed to God the Father, endeavour to prepare for this application of the words by translating the beginning of the 8th verse in a manner which the syntax admits, although it creates a very harsh figure. "Unto the Son, he saith, God is thy throne for ever," *i. e.* the support of thy throne. As it is said by God to the Messiah, Psalm lxxxix. 4. "I will build up thy throne to all generations." And they consider the 10th, 11th, and 12th verses as introduced to show the unchangeableness of that God who is the support of the Messiah's

throne. It shall endure for ever ; for that Lord who hath promised to support it has laid the foundations of the earth, and remains the same after the heavens are dissolved. And thus the apostle is made to interrupt a close argument by bringing in three verses, in order to prove what nobody denied, that God is unchangeable. The question is not whether God be able to fulfil his promise. That was admitted by all the Hebrews, whether they received the Gospel or not. But the question is, what God had promised and declared to the Messiah ; and, therefore, these three verses, according to the interpretation now given of them, may be taken away without hurting the apostle's argument, or detracting in the least from the information conveyed concerning the person of Christ. On the other hand, if, following the train of the apostle's reasoning, you consider this quotation as addressed to the same person with the third and fifth, it is a proof of that assertion in the end of the 2d verse, δι' οὗ καὶ τοὺς αἰῶνας ποιῆσε, of which no proof had hitherto been adduced ; and it is a direct proof of such a kind that it cannot be evaded. For the figurative sense, given by the Socinians to the passage in the Colossians, will not avail them here, because the heavens and the earth spoken of in this place are to perish, and wax old like a garment. But the kingdom of righteousness, which Isaiah expressed by new heavens and a new earth, shall endure for ever. The number of its subjects is continually increasing ; and they who are "the workmanship of God in Christ Jesus, created unto good works," shall shine for ever with unfading lustre in the kingdom of their Father. The material, not the moral creation, shall be changed ; and, therefore, the material creation must be meant by that earth and those heavens, which are said to be the work of the Lord here addressed.

5. The original pre-eminence of Jesus Christ is inferred, in the last place, from the manner in which the promise of that dominion, which was to be given him, is expressed in the Old Testament. The quotation in the 13th verse is taken from Psalm cx. which the ancient Jews always applied to the Messiah. It contains a promise which was fulfilled in the Son's being appointed Lord of all things, and in his sitting down on the right hand of the majesty on high. The argument turns upon the style of this promise. A seat on the right is in all countries the place of honour ; and when the Almighty says to the Messiah, "Sit thou at my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool," the address conveys to our minds an impression of the dignity of the person upon whom so distinguished an honour was conferred, as well as of the stability and perpetuity of his kingdom. The Almighty never spoke in this manner to any angel. They do not sit at his right hand. They are spirits employed in public works, sent forth at his pleasure in different services. They are not the servants of men. But the services appointed them by God are *δια τοὺς μέλλοντας ἀληθεύομεν σωτηρίαν*, upon account of, for the benefit of, those who are to inherit eternal life. The Son, on the other hand, remains in the highest place of honour, without ministration, till those who resist his dominion be completely subdued.

There arises from this review of the latter part of the chapter, the strongest presumption that we gave a right interpretation of the first three verses. For if we consider the apostle as there stating the

original pre-eminence of the person who is now appointed Lord of all, we find the most exact correspondence between the positions laid down at the beginning, and the proofs of them adduced in the sequel: whereas if, by a forced interpretation of some phrases in the first three verses, we consider them as stating simply the dominion of Christ, without any respect to his having been in the beginning the Son of God, and the Creator of the world, we are reminded, as we advance, of the violence which we did to the sense of the author, by meeting with quotations which we know not how to apply to that simple proposition to which we had restricted his meaning.

SECTION IV.

HAVING now found in Scripture, full and explicit declarations that Christ is the creator of the world, I shall direct your attention to the amount of that proposition, before I proceed to the other actions that are ascribed to Jesus in his pre-existent state.

The three passages that have been illustrated are a clear refutation of the first opinion concerning the person of Christ. If he was the Creator of the world, he cannot be *ψηλος ανθρωπος*. But it is not obvious how far this proposition decides the question between the second and third opinions, whether he be the first and most exalted creature of God, or whether he be truly and essentially God. It has, indeed, been said by a succession of theological writers, from the Ante-Nicene fathers to the present day, that creation, *i. e.* the bringing things out of nothing to a state of being, is an incommunicable act of Omnipotence; that a creature may be employed in giving a new form to what has been already made, but that creation must be the work of God himself; so that its being ascribed in Scripture to Jesus Christ is a direct proof that he is God.

It appears to me upon all occasions most unbecoming and presumptuous for us to say what God can do, and what he cannot do: and I shall never think that the truth or the importance of a conclusion warrants any degree of irreverence in the method of attaining it. The power exerted in making the most insignificant object out of nothing by a word, is manifestly so unlike the greatest human exertions, that we have no hesitation in pronouncing that it could not proceed from the strength of man; and when we take into view the immense extent, and magnificence, and beauty of the things thus created, the different orders of spirits, as well as the frame of the material world, our conceptions of the power exerted in creation are infinitely exalted. But we have no means of judging whether this power must be exerted immediately by God, or whether it may be delegated by him to a creature. It is certain that God has no need of any minister to fulfil his pleasure. He may do by himself every thing that is done throughout the universe. Yet we see that in the ordinary course of providence he withdraws himself, and employs the ministry of other beings; and we believe that, at the first appearance

of the gospel, men were enabled by the divine power residing in them to perform miracles, *i. e.* such works as man cannot do, to cure the most inveterate diseases by a word, without any application of human art, and to raise the dead. Although none of these acts imply a power equal to creation, yet as all of them imply a power more than human, they destroy the general principle of that argument, upon which creation is made an unequivocal proof of deity in him who creates. And it becomes a very uncertain conjecture, whether reasons perfectly unknown to us might not induce the Almighty to exert, by the ministry of a creature, powers exceeding in any given degree those by which the apostles of Jesus raised the dead.

But although I do not adopt the language of those who presume to say that the Almighty cannot employ a creature in creating other creatures, there appears to me, from the nature of the thing, a strong probability that this work was not accomplished by the ministry of a creature; and when to this probability is joined the manner in which the Scriptures uniformly speak of creation, and the style of those passages in which creation is ascribed to Jesus, there seems to arise from this simple proposition, that Christ is the Creator of the world, a conclusive argument that he is God.

I. A strong probability, from the nature of the thing, that the work of creation was not accomplished by the ministry of a creature. By creation we attain the knowledge of God. In a course of fair reasoning, proceeding upon the natural sentiments of the human mind, we infer from the existence of a world which was made the existence of a Being who is without beginning. But this reasoning is interrupted, in a manner of which the light of nature gives no warning, if that work which to us is the natural proof of a Being who exists necessarily, was accomplished by a creature, *i. e.* by one who owes his being, the manner of his being, and the degree of his power entirely to the will of another. By this intervention of a creature between the true God and the creation, we are brought back to the principles of Gnosticism, which separated the Creator of the world from the Supreme God; and the necessary consequence of considering the Creator of the world as a creature is, that, instead of the security and comfort which arise from the fundamental principle of sound theism, we are left in uncertainty with regard to the wisdom and power of the Creator, to entertain a suspicion that he may not have executed in the best manner that which was committed to him, that he may be unable to preserve his work from destruction or alteration, and that some future arrangements may substitute in place of all that he has made, another world more fair, or other inhabitants more perfect. It is not probable that the uncertainty and suspicion, which necessarily adhere to all the modifications of the Gnostic system, would be adopted in a Divine Revelation; that a doctrine which combats many particular errors of Gnosticism would interweave into its constitution this radical defect, and would pollute the source of virtue and consolation which natural religion opens, by teaching us that the heavens and the earth are the work, not of the God and Father of all, but of an inferior minister of his power, removed, as every creature must be, at an infinite distance from his glory.

II. This presumption, which, however strong it appears, would not of itself warrant us to form any conclusion, is very much confirmed, when we attend to the manner in which the Scriptures uniformly speak of creation. You will recollect, that in the Old Testament, Maker of heaven and earth is the characteristic of the true God, by which he is distinguished from idols. "The Lord," says Jeremiah, "is the true God; he is the living God, and an everlasting King. The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion." Jer. x. 10, 11, 12. Creation is uniformly spoken of as the work of God alone.* And it is stated as the proof of his being, and the ground of our trust in him.† "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. The sea is his, and he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. O Lord, how manifold are thy works: in wisdom hast thou made them all."‡ I have selected only a few striking passages. But they accord with the whole strain of the poetical books of the Old Testament: and the apostle Paul states the argument contained in them, when he says to the Romans, i. 20. "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." The things made by God are to us the exhibition of his eternal power; and a few verses after, when he is speaking of the worship of the heathen, the form of his expression intimates that no being intervenes between the creature and the Creator. "They served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever;" *των κτισμάτων, ὅς ἐστιν εὐλογητός ἕως τῶν αἰώνων.* I have only to add, that the book of Revelation states creation as the ground of that praise which is offered by the angels in heaven. "The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."§

III. The style of the three passages of the New Testament, in which creation is ascribed to Jesus Christ, does not admit of our considering him as a creature. In the first of the three passages, Jesus is called God. It is admitted that the word God is used in Scripture in an inferior sense, to denote an idol, which exists only in the imagination of him by whom it is worshipped as a god, and to denote a man raised by office far above others. But it has been justly observed, that the arrangement of John's words renders it impossible to affix any other than the highest sense to Θεός in this place. In the first verse of John, the last word of the preceding clause is made the first of that which follows. *Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ Θεός*

* Job. xxxviii. Isaiah xl. 12: xlv. 24.

† Isaiah xl. 26. Jer. xiv. 22.

‡ Psalm, xix. xcvi. civ.

§ Rev. iv. 10, 11.

ην ὁ λόγος. There must be a purpose to mislead, in a writer who with this arrangement has a different meaning to Θεός at the end of the second, and at the beginning of the third clause. The want of the article is of no importance. For in the sixth verse of that chapter, and in numberless other places, Θεός without the article is applied to God the Father. In the second passage, Jesus is called εἰκὼν τοῦ Θεοῦ τοῦ αὐτοῦ. And in the third ἀπαγγέλλουσα τῆς δόξης, καὶ χαράς τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ, phrases which must be understood in a sense very far removed from the full import of the figure, unless they imply a sameness of nature. In the second passage, it is said that all things were made διὰ αὐτοῦ, a phrase which might apply to a creature whom the Almighty chose to employ as his minister. But it is said in the same passage, that they were made εἰς αὐτόν, which signifies that he was much more than an instrument, and that his glory was an end for which things were made. It is said also, πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν, which implies that his power is not occasional and precarious, but that he is able to preserve what he has made, and so may be an object of trust to his creatures. In the third passage, it is said that God made the worlds by the Son. But the quotation from the Psalms adduced in proof of this position, represents the Son as the Creator; and as in no degree susceptible of the changes to which his works are subject. “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. Thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.”

When you take, in conjunction with the strong probability that the Creator of the world is not a creature, the language of the Old Testament, which makes creation the work of the true God, and the language of the New Testament, where creation is ascribed to Jesus, you discover the traces of a system which reconciles the apparent discordance. Jesus Christ is essentially God, always with the Father, united with him in nature, in perfections, in counsel, and in operations.—“Whatsoever things the Father doth, these also doeth the Son likewise.”* The Father acts by the Son, and the Son, in creating the world, displayed that power and Godhead which from eternity resided in him. If this system be true, then creation, the characteristic mark of the Almighty, may, in perfect consistency with the passages quoted from the Old Testament, be ascribed to Jesus, because, although the Father is said to have created the world by him, upon account of the union in all their operations, yet he is not a creature subservient to the will of another, but himself “the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.” This system is delivered in the earliest Christian writers. “The Father had no need,” they say, “of the assistance of angels to make the things which he had determined to be made; for the Son and the Spirit are always with him, by whom and in whom he freely made all things, to whom he speaks when he says, Let *us* make man after our image; and who are one with him, because it is added, So God created man in his own image.”†

* John v. 19.

† Irenæus, lib. iv. cap. 20, edit. Massuet.

We require more evidence than we have yet attained, before we can pronounce that this system is true. You will only bear in mind, that it is suggested in all the passages of the New Testament, which give an account of the creation of the world by Jesus Christ; and that if it shall appear to be supported by sufficient evidence, it reconciles that account with the natural impressions of the human mind, and the declarations of Scripture concerning the extent of power and the supremacy of character implied in the act of creation.

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CHAPTER V.

ACTIONS ASCRIBED TO JESUS IN HIS PRE-EXISTENT STATE.

Administration of Providence.

THOSE passages, from which we learnt that Jesus is the Creator of the world, taught us also to consider him as the Preserver of all the things which he made. This last character implies a continued agency, and resolves all that care of Providence by which the creatures have been supported from the beginning, into actions performed by Jesus in a state of pre-existence. There is nothing in the ordinary course of nature which indicates the agency of this person; there is no part of the principles of natural religion which requires that we should distinguish his agency from the power of the Almighty Father of all; and therefore, the Scriptures, in speaking of those interpositions of Providence which respect the material world, and the life of the different animals, are not accustomed to direct our attention particularly to that Person, by whom the divine power is exerted. But they do intimate, that the particular economy of Providence, which respects the restoration of the human race, was administered in all ages by that Person, by whose manifestation it was accomplished: and upon these intimations is founded an opinion which, since the days of the apostles, has been held by almost every Christian writer who admits the pre-existence of Jesus, that he who in the fulness of time was made flesh, appeared to the patriarchs, gave the law from Mount Sinai, spake by the prophets, and maintained the whole of that intercourse with mankind, which is recorded in the Old Testament as preparatory to the coming of the Messiah.

The early date of this opinion, and the general consent with which it has been received, the frequent mention made of it in theological books, the uniformity which it gives to the conduct of the great plan of redemption, and the extent of that information which it promises to open, all conspire to draw our attention to it, and induce me to lay before you the grounds upon which it rests. They consist not of explicit declarations of Scripture, sufficient by themselves to establish the opinion, but of an induction of particulars, which, although they may escape careless readers, seem intended to unfold to those who search the Scriptures, a view both of that active love towards the human race which characterizes the Saviour of the world, and of the original dignity of his person.

The general principles of this opinion are these. God, the Father, is represented in Scripture as “invisible, whom no man hath seen at

any time." But it is often said in the Old Testament that the patriarchs, the prophets, and the people saw God; and there is an ease, a familiarity of intercourse in many of the scenes which are recorded, inconsistent with the awful majesty of him who covereth himself with thick clouds. The God of Israel, whom the people saw, is often called an angel, *i. e.* a person sent; therefore he cannot be God the Father, for it is impossible that the Father should be sent by any one. But he is also called Jehovah. The highest titles, the most exalted actions, and the most entire reverence are appropriated to him. Therefore he cannot be a being of an inferior order. And the only method in which we can reconcile the seeming discordance is, by supposing that he is the Son of God, who, as we learn from John, "was in the beginning with God, and was God," who being at a particular time "made flesh," and so manifested in the human nature, may be conceived, without irreverence, to have manifested himself at former times in different ways. This supposition, suggested by the language of the Old Testament, seems to be confirmed by the words of our Lord, John vi. 46, "Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father," and of his apostle, John i. 18, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The meaning of this passage extends to the former declarations of God under the Old Testament. For it is remarkable, that it is not the preterperfect tense which is used in the original, but the aorist, which intimates that he, "who is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared him" also in times past. He who alone was qualified to declare God, who certainly did declare him by the Gospel, and who is styled by the apostle, "the image of the invisible God," as the person in whom the glory of the Godhead appeared to man, seems to be pointed out as the angel who was called by the name of God in ancient times.

These general principles receive a striking illustration when we attend to the detail of the appearances recorded in the Old Testament, because we find upon examination that all the divine appearances made in a succession of ages, are referred to one person, who is often called in the same passage, both Angel and Jehovah, and that several incidental expressions in the New Testament mark out Christ to be this person.

SECTION I.

ALL APPEARANCES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT REFERRED TO ONE PERSON, CALLED ANGEL AND GOD.

IN the eighteenth chapter of Genesis, it is said that "the Lord," which, when written in capital letters, is always the translation of Jehovah, that "Jehovah appeared unto Abraham in the plains of Mamre;" and the manner of the appearance is very particularly related. "Abraham lifted up his eyes, and three men stood by him." He received them hospitably, according to the manners of the times.

In the course of the interview, one of the three speaks with the authority of God, promises such blessings as God only can bestow, and is called by the historian Jehovah. Two of the men departed and "went toward Sodom, but Abraham," it is said, "stood yet before the Lord." He inquires of him respectfully about the fate of Sodom; he reasons with him as the Judge of all the earth, who has it in his power to save and to destroy; and we may judge of the impressions which he now has of the nature of the man, whom a little before he had received in his tent, when he says to him, "Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but dust and ashes." It is the same Lord, whom Abraham saw in this manner, that appeared to him at other times, and, after his death, to his son Isaac; for a reference is made in the future appearances to the promise that had been made at this time. To Jacob, the grandson of Abraham, the Lord appeared upon different occasions, under the name of the God of Abraham and Isaac, *i. e.* the God who had blessed them; he repeats to Jacob what he had said to them, that his posterity should possess the land of Canaan, and become a great nation, and that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed. xxviii. 13, 14. Jacob, after one appearance, said, "I have seen God face to face," xxxii. 30; after another, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and he called the name of the place Bethel," *i. e.* the house of God, xxviii. 16—19. He raised a pillar; he vowed a vow to the God whom he had seen, and at his return he paid the vow. Yet this God, to whom he gave these divine honours, and of whom he spoke at some times as Jehovah the God of Abraham and Isaac, at other times he calls an angel. "The angel of God," he says, "spake unto me in a dream, saying, I am the God of Bethel," xxxi. 11—13; and upon his death-bed he gives in the same sentence the name of God and angel to this person, xlviii. 15. "He blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads." The prophet Hosea refers in one place to the earnestness with which Jacob begged a blessing from the Lord who appeared to him, which is called in Genesis his wrestling with a man and prevailing. So says Hosea, xii. 2—5. "By his strength he had power with God, yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us, even the Lord God of hosts, the Lord is his memorial." The same person is called in this passage God, the angel, and the Lord God of hosts.

In Exodus iii. we read, that when Moses came to Horeb, "the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. Moses turned about to see this sight, "And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and I am come down to deliver them, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land. Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people." You will

observe in this passage an interchange of the names angel and God, a reference to the former appearances which the patriarchs had seen, and a connexion established between this appearance and the subsequent manifestations to the children of Israel; so that the person whom Abraham saw in the plains of Mamre, and who brought Israel out of Egypt, is declared to be the same. Moses asks the name by which he should call the God who had thus come down to deliver the children of Israel. “And God said, I am that I am: thou shalt say to the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you.” This very particular mode of expression is intended to be the interpretation of Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God, implying his necessary, eternal, and unchangeable existence. Other beings may be, or may not be. There was a time when they were not: the will of him who called them into existence may annihilate them; and even while they continue to exist, there may be such alterations upon the manner of their being, as to make them appear totally different from what they once were. But God always was, and always will be, that which he now is: and the name which distinguishes him from every other being, and is truly expressive of his character, is this, *εγω εμι ο αν.*

It is very remarkable that in the same passage in which the person who appeared to Moses assumed this significant phrase as his name, he is called by the historian, the angel of the Lord; and Stephen, Acts vii. 30, 35, in relating this history before the Jewish Sanhedrim, shows the sense of his countrymen upon this point, by repeating twice the word *angel*. “There appeared to Moses in the wilderness of Mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire.” And again, “This Moses did God send to be a ruler and deliverer by the hands of the angel which appeared to him in the bush.” Stephen says most accurately that Moses was sent to be a ruler and deliverer by the hands of this angel; for it was the same angel who appeared to him in the bush; that put a rod in his hand wherewith to do wonders before Pharaoh; that brought forth the people with an out-stretched arm, and led them through the wilderness. Accordingly, Exod. xiii. 21, we read “The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire.” In the next chapter, xiv. 19, we read, “The angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them.” The same Jehovah who led them out of Egypt gave them the law from Mount Sinai; for we read, Exod. xx. 1, 2, “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Our attention is thus carried back by the preface of the law to that appearance which Moses had seen; and accordingly Stephen says, Acts vii. 38, “Moses was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the Mount Sinai.” An angel then spake to Moses in Mount Sinai, yet this angel in giving the law takes to himself the name of Jehovah. The first commandment is, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me:” and Moses when he recites in Deuteronomy the manner of giving the law, says expressly, that God had given it: iv. 33, 36, 39, “Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire as thou hast heard, and live? Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire. Know, therefore.

this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath, there is none else."

All the interpositions recorded in the Pentateuch, by which the enemies of the children of Israel were put to flight, and the people were safely conducted to the land of Canaan, are referred to the same person, who is often called the angel of the Lord that went before them. Moses, who begins the blessing which he pronounced upon the children of Israel before his death with these words, Deut. xxxiii. "The Lord came from Mount Sinai," seems to intend to connect the first appearance, which this Lord made to him in Horeb, with every subsequent manifestation of divine favour, when, in speaking of Joseph, he calls the blessing of God for which he prays, "the good will of him that dwelt in the bush." During a succession of ages all the affairs of the Jewish nation were administered with the attention and tenderness which might be expected from a tutelary deity, or guardian angel, to whom that province was specially committed; and the prophet Isaiah has expressed that protection amidst danger, that support and relief in all their distresses, which the people had experienced from his guardianship, in these beautiful words, Isaiah lxiii. 7, 9: "I will mention the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord, according to all the great goodness towards the house of Israel, which he hath bestowed on them. In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and he bare them and carried them all the days of old." Yet we are guarded in other places against degrading the God of Israel to a level with the inferior deities to whom the nations offered their worship. "Where are their Gods," says the Lord by Moses, Deut. xxxii. 36—40, "their rock in whom they trusted? See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me: For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say I live for ever." And Isaiah xlv. 6. "Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the Lord of hosts, I am the first, and I am the last, and besides me there is no God." This is the language in which the God of Israel speaks of himself, and in which he is addressed by the people through all the books of the Old Testament; and in the long addresses, several of which are recorded, the high characters which distinguish the true God are conjoined with the manifestations in former times, of which I have been giving the history, in such a manner as to show that both are applied to the same Person. One of the most striking examples is the solemn thanksgiving and prayer offered. Nehemiah, ch. ix. by all the congregation of Israel, who returned from the Babylonish captivity, in consequence of the edict of Cyrus the Great. "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the sea, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all, and the host of heaven worshippeth thee. Thou art the Lord, the God who didst choose Abraham,—and madest a covenant with him,—and didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt,—and didst divide the sea before them,—and leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar, and in the night by a pillar of fire. Thou camest down also upon Mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven,—yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness," &c. There

is no interruption, no change of person in the progress of this prayer, so that we must suppose a delusion to run through the whole of the Old Testament, unless the Creator of heaven and earth be the same Person whom Jacob, and Moses, and Isaiah, and Stephen call the Angel of the Lord.

In order to connect all the intimations which the Old Testament gives concerning the God of Israel, you must carry this along with you, that the person who appeared to Moses, and who gave the law from Mount Sinai, commanded the people to make him a sanctuary, that he might dwell amongst them. The command was given to Moses at the time when he went up into the midst of the cloud that abode upon Mount Sinai, and when the sight of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the Mount in the eyes of the children of Israel. At this time Moses received from God the pattern of the ark of the tabernacle, and of the mercy-seat on the top of the ark, having cherubims which covered the mercy-seat with their wings, and looked towards one another. "Thou shalt put," said God, "the mercy-seat above upon the ark, and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubims, of all things which I will give thee in commandment to the children of Israel." *Exod. xxv. 21.* As soon as the tabernacle was reared, and the ark with these appurtenances was brought into it, "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." This cloud was the guide of the children of Israel in their journeyings. When the cloud was taken up from the tabernacle, they went on; when it was not taken up, they rested; and you may judge how intimately they connected the appearance of the ark with the presence of God, from the words recorded, *Numb. x. 35, 36,* as used by Moses in the name of the congregation. The ark of the Lord, it is said, went before them. "And when it set forward, Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee, flee before thee. And when it rested, he said, "Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." Wheresoever the ark was, the God of Israel was conceived to be. In that place, he met with his people. There they consulted him in all their exigencies; and the glory which filled the tabernacle, called the *Schechinah*, was the visible symbol of the presence of the God of Israel. When Solomon built a temple, he introduced into it the ark and the tabernacle. And the joy which he felt in accomplishing that work, arose from his having found a fixed habitation for that sacred pledge of the divine favour which had often been exposed to danger, which had for some time been in the possession of the enemy, but which every devout Israelite regarded as the glory and the security of his nation. In *Psalms xxxii.* which appears to have been composed to celebrate the introduction of the ark into the temple, you find these words: "Arise, O Lord, into thy rest, thou, and the ark of thy strength. The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell." In the solemn prayer of Solomon, at the dedication of the temple, *1 Kings vi.* it is declared to be a house built for the Lord God of Israel, who had made a covenant with their fathers, when he

brought them out of the land of Egypt. As soon as the ark was brought into its place in the temple, the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord. To this place all the prayers and services of the people in succeeding generations were directed. The Lord was known by this name, Jehovah the God of Israel, who dwelleth between the cherubims. And hence arises the significancy of that prayer of the good king Jehoshaphat, when he stood in the house of the Lord before the new court, 2 Chron. xx. 7, 8. "O Lord God of our fathers, art not thou our God who didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever? and they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein, for thy name."

These circumstances also explain to us various expressions in the book of Psalms, which, without attending to them, appear unintelligible. The Psalms were the hymns composed for the service of the temple. The particular occasions upon which several of them were composed, are mentioned in the Old Testament history. And many of them have a special reference to that principle which was incorporated into the very constitution of the Jewish state, that the peculiar residence of the God of Israel was in the ark, and that his presence was manifested by a visible glory encompassed with clouds, and shining sometimes with a dazzling splendour which none could approach; sometimes with a milder lustre which encouraged the servants of the sanctuary to draw nigh. Ps. lxxvi. 1. "In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling in Zion." Ps. xcix. 1. "The Lord reigneth, let the people tremble: He sitteth between the cherubims, let the earth be moved." Many of the Psalms, by their reference to events in the history of the Jewish nation, show us that the God who was worshipped in the sanctuary, is the same who made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who appeared on Mount Sinai, and led his people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron. Psalms lxxviii. cv. and cvi. contain an historical detail, and Psalm lxviii. confirms in a striking manner the glory in which God appeared in the sanctuary with his former manifestations to Israel. "O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people; when thou didst march through the wilderness, the earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God: Even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel. They have seen thy goings, O God, my king, in the sanctuary. Because of thy temple at Jerusalem, shall kings bring presents to thee. O God, thou art terrible out of thy holy places." While the Psalms thus bring together the former events in the history of Israel, and the glory of their God in the sanctuary, they address this person as Jehovah, the Lord of hosts, who made the world and the fulness thereof, the mighty God, the king and judge of all the earth, whom the angels worship, and who alone is to be feared.

The view of the information contained in the Scriptures of the Old Testament concerning the person by whom the law was given, will be complete when it is added, in the last place, that the writings of the later prophets represent him also as the Saviour of Israel, and the author of a new dispensation, which was to be introduced in the last

days. The interposition of the God of Israel, to deliver them out of the many national calamities which mark their history, do by no means exhaust the meaning of the prophecies and thanksgivings, which abound in the sacred books of the Jews. The expressions even of the earlier writers bear a more exalted sense, than is attained by explaining them of any temporal mercies. And about the time of the captivity of the nation, and of their return to their own land, the prophets, in some places, speak plainly of a spiritual deliverance, and in others adopt a richness of imagery, which is unmeaning and even ridiculous, unless it be understood to point to the days of the Messiah. But the clearest intimations of the future glorious dispensation are always conjoined with the mention of its being accomplished by that very person who was the God of Israel. Isaiah sometimes represents the Almighty as himself the Saviour and Redeemer of Israel; at other times, he speaks of a servant, an elect of God, who was to be mighty to save. But this elect is distinguished by such names, Immanuel, *i. e.* God with us, the mighty God, the Prince of peace; and his character and appearance are described with such majesty, that we soon recognise the God of Israel, for whom the people are commanded to wait. Later prophets give the name of Jehovah to the person who was to be employed in bringing the salvation. Zech. ii. 10, 11. "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord. And thou shalt know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto thee." Here is one Jehovah sending another to dwell in Judah. "I will have mercy upon the house of Judah," Hosea i. 7, "and will save them by the Lord their God." Micah v. 2, foretells a "ruler in Israel that was to come out of Bethlehem," not a new person, but one "whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." Jeremiah says expressly that the new covenant with Israel was to be made by the same person who had made the old. Jer. xxxi. 31. "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people." In reference to the covenant mentioned by Jeremiah, Malachi, the last of the prophets, announces the coming of the Messiah in these words, Mal. iii. 1: "Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts." The Lord coming to his own temple is the God of Israel returning to illuminate and glorify by his presence that Jewish temple, which had been originally built for his name, but which, after the destruction of the fabric erected by Solomon, had been left without the Shechinali, the visible symbol of his presence. By his coming, the glory of the latter house, according to the prophecy of Haggai,* was made greater than the glory of the

* Hagg. ii. 9.

former, because no symbol, however sacred or splendid, deserved to be compared with the actual presence, and inhabitation of the Lord of glory. The Lord coming to his own temple is called in this prophecy the Angel or Messenger of the covenant, in whom the Jews delighted, *i. e.* a person sent by another for the purpose of making that new covenant with the house of Israel, which their sacred books taught them to expect. Here, then, we are brought back, at the end of the Old Testament, to the same word Angel or Messenger, which we found at the beginning of it. The Angel, who had appeared to Abraham, to Jacob, and to Moses, who had made the old covenant with Israel, who had been worshipped in his own temple at Jerusalem, is here called the Angel of the covenant which was to be established upon better promises. The conjunction of names in this concluding prophecy collects all the information concerning this person, which we have found scattered through the Old Testament, and seems to be introduced on purpose to teach us, that he who had conducted the former dispensation was to open the new; that the same person, by whom the whole plan of Divine Providence respecting the souls of men had been carried on from the beginning of the world, was to visit the Jewish temple before it was demolished a second time; and having received the adoration of that people whom he had chosen in the temple, which was his own during all the time that it stood, was to be entitled by another manifestation, and a fresh display of his love, to adorations and thanksgivings corresponding to the nature and extent of the blessings conveyed by the new covenant.

This singular prophecy, which collects all the information concerning the person of whom we have been speaking, is found in the conclusion of the Old Testament; and in the beginning of the New, it is applied by Mark to Jesus Christ. This application is a favourable omen of the success to be expected in the second part of this discussion, in which I propose to show, that, as all the divine appearances made in a succession of ages are referred in the Old Testament to one person, who is called both Angel and Jehovah, so many incidental expressions in the New Testament mark out Christ to be this person.

SECTION II.

THERE is no passage in the New Testament which directly affirms that every thing said in the Old Testament of that Person who is called both Angel and Jehovah belongs to Christ. But this is not the only instance in which the intimate connexion between the two dispensations is left to be gathered by those who inquire. There are many parts of the counsel of God, with respect to which, as the Apostle speaks, to those whose minds are blinded, the veil remains untaken away in reading the Old Testament. And it does not appear unworthy of the wisdom of God to have provided in this way a reward for that industry which is directed to the Scriptures, a satisfaction to speculative minds, and an increase of the evidence of Chris-

tianity, according to the progress which men make in sacred knowledge.

In the progress of this part of the discussion, you will have a specimen of what the Apostle calls "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," in order to "know the things that are freely given us of God." You will find the proof consisting of a number of detached circumstances. But you will not, upon that account, think it incomplete. Circumstantial evidence is often resorted to in human affairs. There are many occasions upon which it is not judged worthy of less credit than the most direct testimony; and, with regard to the particular object of this discussion, if we are attentive and patient in the interpretation of Scripture, the sentiments of the apostles, whose writings are the standard of our faith, may be as certainly known from the manner in which they have expressed themselves at many different times, as if any of them had judged it proper formally to show that Christ is the Jehovah who appeared to the patriarchs, who was worshipped in the temple, and who was announced as the author of a new dispensation.

In collecting the evidence of this whole proposition, it is natural to invert the order in which I brought forward the different parts of it. For Christ is known in the New Testament as the author of the new dispensation. That is the character under which we find him there. The first thing, therefore, to be derived from thence, is an answer to this question, whether the terms in which the author of the new dispensation was announced under the Old Testament are applied to Christ in the New. If they are, we should be warranted to infer, from the induction of particulars formerly stated, that he was also worshipped in the temple, and that he appeared to the patriarchs. But our faith in the whole proposition will be very much confirmed, if, independently of proof of the second and third facts which necessarily arises from the proof of the third, we find them also established by separate evidence.

1. It appears from various expressions in the New Testament, that Christ is Jehovah, the Saviour of Israel, who was announced in the Old Testament as the author of a new dispensation. The allusions that occur in the New Testament to expressions in the Old respecting the Saviour of Israel, are infinite in number, and constitute a striking illustration of this part of the general proposition. But there are two heads under which we may arrange those passages, which afford the most conclusive proof that Christ is the person who was thus announced. The first is the application made in the New Testament of the prophecies respecting the forerunner of Jehovah, the Saviour of Israel; and the second is a number of quotations, from a long prophecy of Isaiah, that extends from the seventh to the twelfth chapter.

1. Application of the prophecies respecting the forerunner of Jehovah, the Saviour of Israel. The first two verses of Mark's Gospel are these; "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee;" and the same prophecy is applied in Matthew and Luke to John Baptist. The words are taken, with a small variation, from Malachi iii. 1.

In the prophet, the person whose messenger was to prepare the way before him speaks, "Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." In the gospels, the Almighty speaks to the person, whose way the messenger was to prepare. "I send my messenger before thy face." As the passage is literally the same in all three gospels, the variation from the present reading of the Old Testament was probably occasioned by some version or copy of the Hebrew, different from any now extant. The amount of the prophecy is the same, and the fulfilment equally exact, whether you read "before me," or "before thee;" and the direct application to John the Baptist of the first part of the verse in Malachi, is a clear warrant to apply the second part of the verse to Jesus, the person before whom John went, *i. e.* to consider Jesus as Jehovah coming to his own temple, the messenger of the covenant, whom the Jews were taught by the later prophets to expect. This inference, legitimately drawn from the use made of the first part of the verse in Malachi, is established by that quotation which immediately follows in Mark, and which is adopted by the other Evangelists in the beginning of the gospels. "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. This is the account which John gave of himself when the Jews sent to him, asking, "Who art thou? I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias." The quotation is taken from the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, the first eleven verses of which are an account of the nature and the manner of that salvation which the God of Israel was to bring. When you recollect the language which John uniformly employed with regard to himself, "I am not the Christ, but I am sent before him; that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come, baptizing with water;" and when you find the inspired historians agreeing with John himself in applying to him this prophecy of Isaiah, you have no doubt that Jesus is the Lord, whose way the voice was to prepare; and you are directed to apply to Jesus all the expressions employed in that passage to characterize the person before whom the voice went, *i. e.* you will find, upon reading these eleven verses of Isaiah, that you are taught by this application of one of them to consider Jesus as Jehovah, the God of Israel, who came himself, with a strong hand, to be their Saviour, and their Shepherd. Accordingly, the angel, in the first chapter of Luke's gospel, thus announces to Zachariah the birth of John; "Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God; and he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord," referring, in this annunciation, to the prophecies, both of Isaiah and Malachi: and our Lord, by taking to himself the name of the good shepherd, and by frequently calling his disciples his flock, his sheep, and his lambs, plainly refers to these words of the fortieth chapter of Isaiah, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm." But as all the parts of that prophecy mark one person whom the voice was to announce, if this expression belong to him, the rest belong also.

II. The other head, under which I proposed to arrange those expressions, which afford the most conclusive proof that Jesus is the

person who was announced in the Old Testament, as Jehovah, the Saviour of Israel, is a number of quotations from a long prophecy in Isaiah, that extends from the seventh to the twelfth chapter. The kings of Syria and Israel had combined against the kingdom of Judah, and they threatened to dethrone Ahaz, the king, and to raise a stranger to rule over the house of David. The prophet is sent to comfort the king and the people, by giving them assurance of the stability of the kingdom of Judah, and of deliverance from their present enemies. The prophecy has an immediate reference to the circumstances of the kingdom. But you find, upon reading it, such a mixture as is not uncommon in the Old Testament prophecies. You meet with expressions which seem to look far beyond the events of which the prophet is speaking, names and epithets which cannot, without a striking impropriety, be applied to any person born about that time, but which are a natural description of the character and office of that illustrious descendant of David, whom former prophecies had announced, and whose everlasting dominion is introduced into this prophecy of a temporal deliverance, as the most entire security that the designs of the enemies of Judah must fail, because the counsels of heaven did not admit of any interruption in the lineal succession to that crown, which was to flourish for ever upon the head of the Messiah. This is the train of thought by which the promises of temporal and of spiritual deliverance are blended together in this message to the king of Judah. It is not easy to separate them from one another, and some of the expressions are so dark, that in order to form a just conception of their meaning, you will find it necessary to call in the assistance of some of the many authors by whom they have been illustrated. You will derive particular advantage from reading one of Bishop Hurd's Lectures, in which a part of this prophecy is elucidated with the clearness and accuracy which distinguish this master of sacred criticism. It is also fully illustrated by Macculloch. Even although you should not follow the prophet in all the changes of subject, or assign the precise meaning of every expression, you are led by a general acquaintance with the language of the Old Testament prophecies to consider many of the names that occur in this prophecy as descriptive of the Messiah; and you find the apostles of our Lord making the application to him. Matthew, in relating the miraculous conception of our Lord, as announced by the angel to Mary, says, "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." This is taken from Isaiah vii. 14, and being applied to Jesus, we are taught that he is God with us, the Jehovah of Israel, who, according to the promise by Zechariah, was to come and dwell in the midst of them.* The Word was God, and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us. The angel who appeared to Mary said, in the first chapter of Luke, "Thou shalt bring forth a Son, and shalt call his name Jesus: And he shall be great, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of

* Zechar. ii. 10, 11.

Jacob for ever and ever : and of his kingdom there shall be no end." There is a reference here both to Isaiah vii. 14, and also to Isaiah ix. 6, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given ; and the government shall be upon his shoulder : and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order and to establish it for ever." Jesus, then, being, according to this application of the prophecy, that Son of David who was to sit for ever on the throne of his Father, is also the mighty God. In another part of this prophecy, Isaiah calls this Son "a rod out of the stem of Jesse," and "a branch out of his roots, which should stand as an ensign to the people, and to which the Gentiles should seek." And the Apostle Paul, in the course of an argument to show that Jesus Christ not only fulfilled the promises made to the fathers, but was given also that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy, applies these words to him, Rom. xv. 12 : "And again Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles, in him shall the Gentiles trust." Allusions to other expressions of this prophecy are to be found in the writings of the apostles. But the direct quotations which have been made are sufficient to show that, in their eyes, Jesus Christ is that Saviour of Israel whom the prophet, from the beginning to the end of the spiritual part of the prophecy, announces. That Person, according to the prophet, is Jehovah the God of Israel. Therefore we have the authority of the inspired books of the New Testament for the truth of the third part of our general proposition.

It is true that he is often styled in the New Testament a man sent, given, raised up by God to be the Saviour of the world. It is said that he received power of God ; that the Spirit was given him ; that he came to do his Father's will. And this language may seem to be inconsistent with his being Jehovah. But you will recollect that we meet with the same inconsistency in the Old Testament. The ancient Scriptures speak of the Saviour of Israel as Jehovah sent by Jehovah, himself the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and as a Son born of a virgin. It is by this peculiar manner of designation that we distinguish him in the Old Testament from God the Father. When we find the same peculiarity in the New Testament, we are confirmed in the application which we have made ; and Jesus the Saviour must be the Jehovah, who was to come and save Israel, because, like him, he is called both the messenger of God, and God.

II. The second part of the general proposition is, that Jesus is the Person who was worshipped in the temple at Jerusalem, and whose glory filled the tabernacle. It might be sufficient to rest the proof of this upon the prophecy of Malachi. The same Person is there called the Lord coming to his own temple, and the messenger of the covenant. But Jesus is unquestionably the messenger of the covenant. Therefore the temple to which he came was his, and it could not without impiety be called his, unless he was worshipped there. This proof is confirmed by many analogies, and by some express intimations in the New Testament.

The analogies are of this kind. Jesus is called the effulgence of

the Father's glory. John says, ἐσκηνώσεν, he tabernacled amongst us, and εθεασαμεθα δοξαν αὐτου, we contemplated his glory; a phraseology most natural in a Jew, who considered the Shechinah as the visible symbol of the divine presence, if he also believed that the Person, who had exhibited that symbol for many ages in the temple, became by his incarnation an inhabitant of earth. His body was a tabernacle which veiled the glory of his presence in such a manner as to make it safe for mortals, θεασασθαι, to look steadily for some time upon it. There is one occasion, indeed, recorded in the gospels, when this glory burst forth so as to overpower the beholders. Upon a mount to which Jesus led three of his disciples, "he was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as snow, and a bright cloud overshadowed them." This is called by Peter, when relating this vision, μεγαλοπρεπὴς δόξα, the transcendent glory. The veil which usually concealed the majesty of the Godhead from the sight of the disciples was for a moment dropped, and their senses were astonished with an effulgence, such as filled the tabernacle at those times when it was unsafe even for the sons of Aaron to enter. This appearance, however transitory, was fitted to mark out Jesus to those who were permitted to behold it as the Lord of glory and it is stated by the apostle as the pledge of that glory in which he is now enthroned, and in which he shall come to judge the world, 2 Peter i. 16, 17. "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, when we were with him in the holy mount." The new Jerusalem is thus described by John. "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them. The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Rev. xxi. 3, 23. It is said that Jesus shall come at the last day, ἐν πυρὶ φλογος: And that he shall destroy the man of sin, τῇ ἐπιφανείᾳ τῆς παρουσίας αὐτοῦ, with the manifestation of his presence, 2 Thess. ii. 8. All this language of the New Testament is borrowed from the Shechinah. And it will appear most proper and significant, when you consider Jesus, whose glory enlightens heaven, whose brightness dazzled the eyes of the disciples on the mount, and whose excellence might be contemplated when it shone "full of grace and truth" through the veil of his flesh, as the Lord of the temple, whose presence had formed both the more awful and the more encouraging appearances of the Shechinah. Analogies of this kind, when they are frequent and striking, constitute a very satisfying evidence to those who are capable of tracing them. But as they may be abused, it is always desirable to have them supported by some direct proofs of which the judgment may lay hold, without the aid of imagination. The direct proofs of the point suggested by these analogies, are of two kinds. The first consists of quotations applied to Jesus from those Psalms in which the glory of the Jehovah of Israel in his temple is described. The second is the testimony of the Apostle John.

1. The Psalms were hymns composed for the service of the temple; and several of them were mentioned formerly in proof of this position, that the Person worshipped in the temple was the same who had

appeared to the patriarchs. But several expressions in these very Psalms are applied by the apostles to Christ. We read in Psalm xviii. "This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in. They have seen thy goings, O God, my king, in thy sanctuary." But the apostle, Eph. iv. 8, when speaking of the gift of Christ, quotes in proof of it, the 18th verse of this Psalm: "Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men; and he argues that the propriety of the expression, "he ascended," arises from this, that the same person who ascended had first descended. Now one person is addressed or spoken of from the beginning to the end of the Psalm. It is impossible that at the 18th verse there can be an abrupt address to Christ, without any intimation that the person addressed is different from him mentioned in the 17th verse, and spoken of in the sequel. We have, therefore, the authority of the Apostle Paul for applying the whole of Psalm lxviii. to Jesus, so that we may say of him, as in the 29th verse, "Because of thy temple at Jerusalem shall kings bring presents to thee." Again, the apostle to the Hebrews derived one proof that Jesus was originally superior to angels from the command given them to worship him. But this command is found in Psalm xcvi. where the majesty of the God of Israel is described in his temple. "The Lord reigneth. Clouds and darkness are round about him. A fire goeth before him. Confounded be all they that serve graven images; worship him, all ye gods, or angels. Zion heard, and was glad." The command is introduced in a manner which plainly distinguishes the person to be worshipped from idols, and marks him to be the God of Israel. He then, whom the apostle to the Hebrews calls the first begotten, is the same who in Judah "was high above all the earth." Once more, the apostle derives his proof that Christ created the world from a passage in Psalm cii. But we cannot consider these words as addressed by the Psalmist to Christ, without admitting that he is the person mentioned in the former part of the psalm. And the reasoning of the apostle is inconclusive and sophistical, unless the person of whom he is speaking in that chapter be the same of whom the Psalmist is speaking in that psalm, *i. e.* the God who was worshipped in Zion, the Saviour of Israel, who was to appear in his glory, and whose praise was to be declared in Jerusalem, when he built up Zion.

2. The argument founded upon these quotations is confirmed by the express testimony of John xii. 41. The evangelist, speaking of the many miracles which were performed by Jesus before the Jews, but which had not the effect of leading them to believe on him, quotes a passage from the sixth chapter of Isaiah, in which the unbelief of the Jews is foretold; and then he subjoins,—“These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory and spake of him.” When you read that chapter of Isaiah, you will find a most awful and majestic description of the glory of the Almighty in the temple, not that cloud which encouraged the priests to draw near, but that bright refulgent glory which no man could see and live. “I saw,” says Isaiah, “the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple.” The expression in the Septuagint is, *παρεξ ὁ οίκος της δοξης αὐτου*. This was shown in the vision to Isaiah before

the date of the long prophecy to which I formerly referred, as if to qualify the prophet for receiving that extraordinary communication of the spiritual deliverance prepared for his people. But he felt the weakness of humanity in this manifestation of the glory of the Lord. "Wo is me," he said, "for I am undone; for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of hosts." Now that which Isaiah saw is called by John his glory, *i. e.* according to the context, the glory of Christ. Therefore Christ is the Lord of hosts, whose glory filled the temple. In order to evade the force of this evident conclusion, those who deny the pre-existence and the divinity of Christ have adopted the paraphrase of Dr. Clarke. "The true meaning," he says, "is, when Esaias saw the glory of God the Father revealing to him the coming of Christ, he then saw the glory of him who was to come in the glory of his Father. Esaias in beholding the glory of God, and in receiving from him a revelation of the coming of Christ, saw, that is, foresaw the glory of Christ just as Abraham saw, *i. e.* foresaw his day and was glad."* You may judge of the influence which attachment to system has upon the most acute and enlightened minds, when such a man as Dr. Clarke could do such violence to words in this short sentence of John. He considers *saw* as equivalent to *foresaw*, although neither Isaiah nor John intimate that the objects presented to the prophet's sight were a prophecy of future events; and he considers *his glory*, *i. e.* the glory of Christ, as equivalent to the glory of God revealing to him the coming of Christ at the end of the world. I should rather say that his interpretation gives a double meaning to each of the words, εἶδε τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ. He saw the glory of God, and he foresaw the glory of Christ.

III. One part of the general proposition still remains. That Christ is the person who appeared to the patriarchs, and gave the law.

We are entitled to consider this as an inference from the points already proved. For Christ having been found to be the Saviour of Israel, who was worshipped in the temple, he must, according to the induction stated in the former section, be the same who appeared to the patriarchs, and who gave the law from Mount Sinai. But we are not obliged to have recourse to this mode of proof. Even of this last point, seemingly the most remote from the gospel, the New Testament contains separate evidence; for there are many expressions in the New Testament, of which this part of the proposition gives the most natural interpretation, and there are others which require the belief of it. Of the first kind are the following: When our Lord says, John viii. 59, "Abraham saw my day, and was glad;" the words will appear most significant, if Christ was the person who appeared to Abraham. When Peter says, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11, "The prophets prophesied of the grace which should come, searching what the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify," he seems to say that Christ spake by the prophets; and when he says, in the same Epistle, "Christ was quickened," *i. e.* raised from the dead "in the spirit, by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometimes were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing," all the

* Clarke's Works, vol. iv. No. 597.

other meanings which have been affixed to these obscure words, appear forced and unnatural, when compared with this, that Christ is Jehovah, who said before the flood, "My spirit shall not always strive with man, yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years," and who, during this time of forbearance, raised up Noah, a preacher of righteousness. Once more, when our Lord says, Matth. xxiii. 37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" if you consider our Lord as the person who had carried the Jews in the days of old, who had sent prophets, and by a mixture of mercies and chastisements, had called them to repentance, this lamentation over Jerusalem has a consistency, a beauty, and an energy, which are very much lost, by supposing that his peculiar care of them only began with his manifestation in the flesh.

It is plain that all these passages derive much light and improvement from admitting that Jesus is the person who appeared to the patriarchs and gave the law. But there are other passages in the New Testament, the sense of which obviously requires the truth of this part of the proposition. The Apostle, 1 Cor. x. 4, in applying the history of the children of Israel as an example and warning to Christians, has these words: "They drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ." The part of Jewish history to which the Apostle refers, is thus related, Psalm lxxviii. 15, 16, "He clave the rocks in the wilderness, and gave them drink as out of the great depths. He brought streams also out of the rock." In grateful remembrance of this seasonable exertion of divine power, God is often called in the Old Testament the Rock of Israel: so Psalm lxxviii. 35, it is said, "They remembered that God was their rock, and the High God their Redeemer." Now the Apostle says, that the spiritual rock that followed, *i. e.* went along with them in their journey, was Christ. His power brought water out of the rock, and the same power continued to defend and guide them. Again, 1 Cor. x. 9, the Apostle, continuing to draw a lesson to Christians from the history of the Israelites, says, "Neither let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents." We read, Dent. vi. 16, "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted him in Massah." And here the Apostle substitutes Christ in place of the Lord their God. The Greek runs thus, *Μηδε εκπειραζωμεν τον Χριστον, καθως και τινες αυτων επειρασαν*. It has been well observed that the particles *καθως και*, require us to repeat after *επειρασαν* the same accusatives which had followed *εμπειραζωμεν*: and almost all the MSS. and the most ancient versions agree with the earliest writers who quote this passage in reading *Χριστον* as the first accusative. The 18th verse of Psalm lxviii. which I mentioned formerly as quoted by the apostle to the Ephesians, and applied to Christ, immediately follows another verse of that Psalm, in which are these words,—“The Lord is among them in the holy place, as in Sinai;” so that the same person who ascended on high was in Sinai: and accordingly the apostle to the Hebrews xii. 25, 26, has taught us that it was the voice of Christ which shook Mount Sinai. “See that ye refuse not him that

speaketh from heaven; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven. Whose voice then shook the earth." It is not easy for one who is acquainted with the phraseology of the New Testament, to understand any other by "him that speaketh from heaven" than Jesus Christ. But this is the immediate antecedent to the relative, which begins the next clause, "Whose voice;" and the time marked by "then" is sufficiently determined by the context to be the time of giving the law from Mount Sinai.

All these particulars laid together constitute an evidence which appears to be satisfactory, that Jesus Christ is the person who appeared to the patriarchs, and gave the law from Mount Sinai, who was worshipped in the temple at Jerusalem, and who was announced by the prophets as the author of a new dispensation.

SECTION III.

THERE are some objections to the conclusiveness of the evidence now adduced, and there is a difference of opinion with regard to the amount of the proposition, supposing it to be proved. It is proper that you should be acquainted both with the objections and with the different opinions. In following out this discussion, I was led to consult a variety of authors, many of whom repeat the same things, with a small change of expression. By comparing them together, I shall be able to state the objections and the different opinions clearly; and it may be both agreeable and useful to you to know the names, and to receive a specimen of the manner of those writers who have entered most deeply into this controversy. In the quotations which follow, I shall have occasion to oppose Socinian, Arian, and Athanasian writers to one another. For the objections which the Socinians make to the evidence of the proposition, are answered not only by the Athanasians, but by the Arians also; and the futility of the inference which the Arians draw from the proposition is exposed by the Socinians, as well as by the Athanasians. So that those who hold the third opinion concerning the Person of Christ, have for their allies, in one part of this discussion, those who hold the second opinion, and in another part of it, those who hold the first.

The Socinians are obliged, in consistency with their principles, to combat the whole of that proposition which we have been endeavouring to establish, because, if it be true, it leaves no doubt with regard to the pre-existence of Jesus. I will not follow them in their attempts to give another interpretation to those texts which constitute the evidence of the proposition, but will leave you to judge from reviewing them, whether that interpretation by which the proposition is supported be not agreeable to the natural sense of the words in every particular passage, and to the analogy of all of them taken together. In stating the objections to the evidence, I have two things to lay before you.—1. The Socinian solution of that expression in the Old Testament, an Angel of Jehovah, which furnishes one of the general grounds of the proposition. 2. A plausible argument against it,

drawn from a mode of expression which occurs in different places of the New Testament.

1. The person whom we traced through the Old Testament is often called an angel, the angel of the Lord, from whence it has been inferred that he cannot be God the Father. But Mr. Lindsey, one of the latest and ablest defenders of pure Socinianism, in the Sequel to his Apology, furnishes the following solution of that expression: "In the account which is given of the divine appearances in the Scriptures, it is sometimes related in what form and manner they were notified and made, viz. by an extraordinary light, fire, cloud, audible voice, &c. At all other times it cannot be doubted but there was some sensible sign given, though it be not always mentioned. Now this outward token of the presence of God is what is meant generally by the angel of God, where not particularly specified and appropriated otherwise; that which manifested his appearance, whatever it was." He considers the Shechinah, or material symbol of glory, and the audible voice of the oracle from thence, as angels of the Lord, the true God acting upon them, and manifesting himself by them; and therefore he concludes that it was not any great angel or separate spirit who was seen and heard in the instances quoted from the Old Testament, but God himself appearing in the only way in which a spiritual being can appear, by sensible tokens and actions, exhibited for the end proposed, such as an extraordinary light, a particular shape or figure, an articulate voice, &c. &c.* The solution proceeds upon this sound principle of theism, that all the creatures of God may be employed to execute his purposes. He maketh the winds his messengers, and fire, pestilence, and sword, receiving their destination from him, may be called his angels. But this principle, however true, does not give a satisfactory explication of the subject to which it is applied. For the appearances to be accounted for are not occasional, unconnected, and varying. We have found one angel of God standing forth through all the Scriptures, bearing a certain character, and employed in offices and actions which are described with every circumstance of time and place that can serve to mark a person, and often with a reference to former offices and actions of the same person. I shall give you this answer to the Socinian solution, in the words of Mr. Taylor, an English clergyman, who published, some years ago, a book entitled, *The Apology of Ben Mordecai to his friends for embracing Christianity*. Under the assumed appearance of a Jew, stating the reasons which made him think the Christian faith not inconsistent with the law of Moses, Mr. Taylor artfully introduces, and defends with learning and ingenuity, his own views of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. He considers Jesus as the first of the creatures of God, an angel distinguished above every other, who conducted the dispensation of the Old Testament, and who completed the scheme for the redemption of the human race, by assuming a body at the time when the Gospel was preached. This part of his creed leads him to defend the pre-existence of Jesus against the attacks of the Socinians; and in answer to their hypothesis, that all the appearances which we have ascribed to one person are nothing

* Sequel to Lindsey's Apol. p. 324, 336.

more than the appearance of the invisible Jehovah by symbol, he thus reasons: "The accounts of many of these appearances are given in so plain and historical a manner, and with so many circumstances, which cannot be accounted for either by vision or figurative expression, that both the Jews and Christians of former ages have looked upon them to be literal; and if they are not historical facts, there is no dependence upon the literal sense of any one action recorded in Scripture." "A plague or an earthquake may be called a messenger of Jehovah, though it be no person. But it is never called Jehovah: and it is impossible to conceive how an angel called Jehovah, who was visible to several people at the same time, and conversed with them personally, can be considered merely as a symbol, or as any other than a real person."*

2. The second objection against the proposition which we have been illustrating, is a plausible argument drawn from a mode of expression that occurs in different places of the New Testament. It is said in the first verse of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "God, who at sundry times, and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son." And there are many other expressions to the same purport, which seem to imply that God had not spoken by his Son till the last days; and undoubtedly, if we knew nothing more of the divine dispensations than these words contain, this is the interpretation we should give them. But every author is to be explained in a manner which renders his meaning in one place consistent with his meaning in another; and every author, supposing that his readers will observe this rule, is not accustomed to say in one place every thing that may be said upon a subject, but leaves much to be supplied from other places. When we take into view what we may learn from the rest of Scripture concerning the character and offices of the Son, it is easy to interpret the words of the apostle in this manner. God spake formerly by the prophets, the messengers of his will to the fathers. The Son did not appear. It was not known to the world or to the prophets that they were inspired by the ministry of the Son; and no inconvenience arose from this circumstance not being made known, because the message was equally divine, and claimed the same reverence, whether the prophets received it from God, or from the Son of God. But now the Son hath been made manifest. A person assuming that name, and conversing freely with men, hath declared God, not in vision to prophets, but openly to the people. Now, therefore, it is fit to reveal the original dignity of this Person, in order that respect for the messenger may procure attention and obedience to the message. The earliest Christian writers furnish the answer which I have now given. "The Lord was truly the instructor of the ancient people, first by Moses, afterwards by the prophets. But he is the guide of the new people, by himself face to face."† And the answer has been adopted by those who hold the second and third opinions concerning the Person of Christ, as sufficient to repel this part of the Socinian objection. "The plain sense of the word," says

* Ben Mordecai, p. 228, 256.

† Clem. Alex. Pædag. L. I. c. 8, 11.

Mr. Taylor, “appears to me to be this: God spake formerly to our fathers by the mediation or ministry of the prophets, but now speaks to us by the Son himself, without any such mediation.”* But there is another part of this objection arising from those expressions in the New Testament where the law seems to be ascribed to angels. “Our fathers,” says Stephen, Acts vii. 53, “received the law by the disposition of angels.” And the apostle to the Hebrews argues upon this ground, that the gospel is superior to the law. “If the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which began to be spoken by the Lord?” It is impossible, then, say the Socinians to other Christians, that the Son, whom you account a being superior to angels, was the Author of the law, for the excellence of the gospel is made to consist in this, that it was given by him. The answer to this objection is, in part, the same as to the former. It is implied in some passages of the Old Testament, that the giver of the law was attended upon Mount Sinai by a multitude of the heavenly host.—“The Lord,” says Moses, Deut. xxxiii. 2, “came from Sinai: He shined forth from Mount Paran, and he came with ten thousand of his saints; from his right hand went a fiery law for them.” The Son of God was not then revealed. His superiority to the retinue of angels was not known; and no particular mention being made of him, it is said accurately by Stephen that the fathers received the law *εις διαταγας αγγελων*, *inter turmas angelorum*. Whereas the gospel was spoken by the Lord himself, without that attendance of the heavenly host which constituted part of the awful scene upon Mount Sinai, but with a manifestation of his own original glory. In this respect the manner of giving the law is clearly distinguished from the manner of giving the gospel, without our being obliged to infer from the expressions used that an angel was the author of the law. But in order to perceive the full force of the answer to this objection, you must recollect that the ten commandments are not included under “the word spoken by angels;” for the history of Moses requires us to make a distinction between the decalogue and the rest of the law. The ten commandments were spoken by God himself. “God spake these words, saying, I am Jehovah.” But the majesty with which they were delivered was so terrible, that the people entreated God would not speak to them any more. “Speak thou with us,” they said to Moses, “and we will hear, but let not God speak with us, lest we die.” Accordingly Moses says, Deut. v. 22, “These words,” the decalogue, “the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of fire, with a great voice, and he added no more.” “The rest,” says Dr. Randolph, “both the judicial and the ceremonial law, was delivered, and the covenant was made, by the mediation of Moses; and therefore the apostle says, Gal. iii. 19, ‘The law was ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator:’ hence it is called the law of Moses. And the character given of it in the Pentateuch is this—these are the statutes, and judgments, and laws, which the Lord made between him and the children of Israel in Mount Sinai, by the hand

* Ben Mordecai, p. 317.

of Moses. In like manner, after the tabernacle was reared, God communed with Moses from between the cherubims on the mercy seat, who represented angels, and with the priests who entered the tabernacle. But the people were not permitted to approach."* So far Dr. Randolph, formerly Professor of Divinity in Oxford, whose writings, one entitled a *Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, and another, *Prælectiones Theologicæ*, chiefly upon the divinity of our Saviour, I have found very useful, composed with sound judgment, and with much knowledge of the Scriptures. You will attend to the force of the distinction which he has mentioned. The ten commandments, which are of perpetual and universal obligation, and which are incorporated as part of the gospel, so that the moral law is established by faith, were spoken by God himself. But the judicial and ceremonial law, which were local temporary institutions, not extending beyond the boundaries and the duration of the Jewish state, were ordained by angels in the hand of a Mediator. The divine Author of them was withdrawn from the eyes of the people, for Moses stood between him and them: but there was no intervention of this kind in the delivery of the gospel. Instead of that terrible majesty which had accompanied the giving of the ten commandments, which made the people request that God would not speak any more, there was in the appearance of Jesus a grace which invited men to draw near; and he himself spoke the words of eternal life.

Considering, then, the Socinian objections as not sufficient to invalidate the evidence that has been adduced, I shall now direct your attention to the different opinions that have been held concerning the amount of the general proposition. If Jesus appeared to the patriarchs, gave the law, and was worshipped in the temple, it is plain that he existed before he was born of Mary. But it is not self-evident whether he be an exalted creature, or essentially God. And many of those who consider him as the first of the creatures of God, while they defend his pre-existence against the Socinians, endeavour to reconcile this proposition with their own system. You will judge of the nature of the attempt, from two books in which it is formally made. The one is entitled, *Essay on Spirit*, by Dr. Clayton, formerly Bishop of Clogher, in Ireland. The principles of his book are these. The whole expanse is full of spirits of different ranks and degrees. God may communicate what proportions of his attributes he pleases to the different gradations of created beings: and, according to an ancient opinion, he may employ those upon whom he has conferred more exalted powers, to act in a middle station between him and the lower productions of his Almighty hand. Now, while inferior angels were appointed to preside over other people and nations upon earth, one angel, who is called by Moses Jehovah, had Israel assigned to him by the Most High as the portion of his inheritance. He was the guardian angel of the posterity of Abraham; and the peculiar distinction conferred upon him was this, that he was authorized to appear in the name and person of Jehovah, as his image and representative. Hence, although in some places he is distinguished from the

* *Præl. Theolog.* vol. iii. p. 397.

Almighty who sent him, yet, in others, he takes the name of Jehovah, and claims and receives the honours due to God.

The other book is the apology of Ben Mordecai, one great object of which is to elucidate and support the opinion 'that had been delivered in the Essay on Spirit. Mr. Taylor lays down this principle, that as it is said in the Jewish Scriptures that Jehovah often appeared and conversed with men; and as the supreme God and Father never was seen by any one, there must be some other person besides him who is called by that name. He illustrates the truth of this principle by most of the passages in the Old Testament, to which I have referred in Section First; and then he concludes from them:—"Thus we see that the sacred writers attribute to the angel who acts in the name, and authority, and moral character of God, the name Jehovah. And this angel, speaking in the name of God that sent him, uses the first person; and whatever is performed by this angel is said to be performed by God himself. So the angel who appeared to Moses in the bush, said, 'I am that I am. Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you.' All this is agreeable to the received customs of mankind, and well understood. The angel takes the name of Jehovah, because it is a common maxim, *loquitur legatus sermone mittentis eum*, as an ambassador in the name of his king, or the *fecialis* when he denounced war in the name of the Roman people: and what is done by the angel, is said to be done by God, according to another maxim. *Qui facit per alium, facit per se.*"

From these two writers you may learn the Arian opinion with regard to the amount of the proposition which we have been considering. That person, they say, whom the Scriptures of the Old Testament call both angel and Jehovah, is a created spirit, who was allowed to personate the Almighty, not only speaking by his authority, but appearing in his person, and bearing his name, who having, in the name of Jehovah, conversed with the patriarchs, and given the law, came in the last days in his own person to preach the gospel.

To this opinion I shall oppose the words of Mr. Lindsey and of Dr. Randolph.

It is an opinion which the Socinians cannot admit, because it establishes the pre-existence of Jesus: and as this opinion appears to remove some of the difficulties which attend the third opinion concerning the person of Christ, and has been adopted by many as a middle system between that which degrades the Saviour of the world to the rank of a man, and that which exalts him to be equal with God the Father, the Socinians consider it as peculiarly formidable to their tenets, and they attack it with much vigour, and often with sound argument. Mr. Lindsey, after quoting the manner in which the Lord passed by and proclaimed his name before Moses, says, "If this be not a description and peculiar character of God, where shall we meet with it? An angel ever so great, ever so ancient, is still a creature; and can never be clothed, nor ought to be clothed with these divine attributes upon any occasion." "The whole transaction at Mount Sinai shows that Jehovah was present, and acted, and not another

* Ben Mordecai, p. 245, 233.

for him. It is the God that had delivered them out of Egypt, with whom they were to enter into covenant, as their God, and who thereupon accepted them as his people, and who was the author of their religion and laws, and who himself delivered to them those ten commands, the most sacred part. There is nothing to lead us to imagine that the person who was their God, did not speak in his own name; not the least intimation that here was another representing him.”*

The author of the *Essay on Spirit* is aware of the force of these objections to his system. “The only difficulty in this case,” he says, “is that the Jehovah of Zion does not always declare that he is deputed, but actually and literally speaks in his own name, calls himself Jehovah, and positively prohibits the worship of any God but himself. Thou shalt have none other Gods before me; thereby seeming to forbid even the worship of the Supreme Jehovah.” His answer to this difficulty is, that the Hebrews were far from being explicit and accurate in their style; and that it was customary for prophets and angels to speak in the name and character of God.†

You will judge how far this answer removes the difficulty, from the following extract out of the writings of Dr. Randolph, who, in his vindication of the doctrines of the Trinity, has given a formal answer to the *Essay on Spirit*; and in other parts of his works also, employs much pains to establish this point, that the angel who is called Jehovah in the Old Testament is not a creature, but truly God. “Some, to evade these strong proofs of our Lord’s divinity, have asserted that this was only a created angel, appearing in the name or person of the Father; it being customary in Scripture for one person to sustain the character, and act and speak in the name of another. But these assertions want proof. I find no instances of one person acting and speaking in the name of another, without first declaring in whose name he acts and speaks. The instances usually alleged are nothing to the purpose. If we sometimes find an angel in the book of revelation speaking in the name of God, yet from the context it will be easy to show that this angel was the great angel, the angel of the covenant. But if there should be some instances in the prophetic or poetical parts of Scripture, of an abrupt change of persons, where the person speaking is not particularly specified, this will by no means come up to the case before us. Here is a person sustaining the name and character of the most High God from one end of the Bible to the other; bearing his glorious and fearful name, the incommunicable name Jehovah, expressive of his necessary existence; sitting in the throne of God; dwelling and presiding in his temple; delivering laws in his own name; giving out oracles; hearing prayers; forgiving sins. And yet these writers would persuade us that this was only a tutelary angel; that a creature was the God of Israel, and that to this creature all their service and worship was directed; that the great God, ‘whose name is jealous,’ was pleased to give his glory, his worship, his throne, to a creature. What is this but to make the law of God himself introductory of the same idolatry that was practised by all the nations of the heathen? But

* Lindsey, p. 313—339.

† *Essay on Spirit*, p. 65.

we are told, that bold figures of speech are common in the Hebrew language, which is not to be tied down in its interpretation to the severer rules of modern criticism. We may be assured that those opinions are indefensible, which cannot be supported without charging the word of God with want of propriety or perspicuity. Such pretences might be borne with, if the question were about a phrase or two in the poetical or prophetic parts of Scripture. But this, if it be a figure, is a figure which runs through the whole Scripture. And a bold interpreter must be he, who supposes that such figures are perpetually and uniformly made use of in a point of such importance, without any meaning at all. This is to confound the use of language, to make the Holy Scripture a mysterious unintelligible book, sufficient to prove nothing, or rather to prove any thing, which a wild imagination shall suggest.”*

I have not been willing to interrupt the impression which this whole passage is fitted to make. The three great circumstances contained in it, and which constitute the whole argument upon this subject, are these. 1. The uniformity with which the angel appears in the person of Jehovah. It is not upon a few particular occasions, when an abrupt change of persons might be dictated by strong emotions, or interpreted by interesting situations. But throughout the whole Bible, at the delivery of laws, in plain historical narration, as well as in impassioned poetry, the angel, without any intimation of a figure, speaks as God. But, as has been well said, even an ambassador, when he declares the commands of his prince, speaks in the third person,—The King my master. The prophets commonly introduced their revelations with this exordium, Thus saith the Lord, before they presumed to speak in his name. Angels, when they appeared in vision, declared that they were sent by the God of heaven; and there appears the grossest impiety in supposing that a creature during a succession of ages, *histrioniam exercuisse, in qua Dei nomen assumat, et omnia, quæ Dei sunt, sibi attribuat.*† 2. The second circumstance is, that this angel not only takes the other names by which the Almighty is known, but calls himself Jehovah, although that word, both by its natural import, and by the manner in which the Scriptures introduce it, appears to be the proper distinguishing name of the Supreme God. *Εγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν*, is the exposition which the Septuagint give of this name. Now *το ὢν* was the name given by Plato to the Supreme Being. *’Εὐ*, Thou art, was the single word written upon the entrance of the temple at Delphos; and Plutarch says that this name is solely applicable to God, since that which truly is must be sempiternal. The Scripture use of the name Jehovah corresponds to the import of this exposition. “Thou whose name alone is Jehovah.” “Jehovah is my name, and my glory will I not give to another.”‡ Yet this word the angel takes to himself; and when Moses asked him, if “they shall say unto me, what is his name? What shall I say unto them?” this is the name which he desires Moses to carry to the children of Israel as his.§ 3. The third circumstance is, that the angel not only demands worship, but claims

* Randolph’s View, vol. ii. p. 129.

† Ps. lxxxiii. 18.

‡ Bull. p. 10.

§ Exod. iii. 13, 15.

it as his to the exclusion of every other being. The professed object of the law of Moses was to preserve the Jews from the idolatry of the surrounding nations. But if the author of their law was only a creature of a higher rank than the angels who presided over other kingdoms, and if the continued use of a figure of speech, which was never properly explained, led them to consider this creature as God, then did the Almighty lend his name to establish in the land of Israel the worship of a creature; and all the preparation and splendour of the law were insignificant, since it only taught the Jews to worship one creature, while their neighbours were worshipping another.

These reasons appear to show, that without supposing an inextricable delusion to run through all the Scriptures, we must admit that the person whom we have traced in the Old and New Testament is not a creature, but that the name which he uniformly takes to himself, belongs to him by nature.

It may perhaps occur to you, that by ascribing that intercourse with mankind which is recorded in the Old Testament to a person who is himself truly God, we remove God the Father from all care of the children of men, and detract from the honour due to him. But we may find, as we advance in this subject, that the Scriptures have obviated this difficulty, by intimating that perfect union between the Father and the Son, which was just mentioned in summing up the argument from creation. Although God made the world by his Son, yet he is also the Creator of all, because the Father and the Son are one; and although God from the beginning manifested himself by his Son, "who is the image of the invisible God," yet the glory of the Father and the Son are the same. It was the power of the undivided Godhead which was exerted by the Son at creation: it was the majesty of the undivided Godhead which appeared in the Son upon Mount Sinai; and all the adorations offered through ages to the giver of the law were the tribute which the one true God is alone worthy to receive. We may find that this system is revealed in Scripture; and that it reconciles all the discoveries made concerning the person of the Son of God. At present we are employed in collecting the facts upon which this system rests; and without pretending to speculate as to the probability of any particular fact, we receive the information which the Scripture affords.

One great advantage we derive from the proposition which has lately engaged our attention. It connects in the closest manner the Old and the New Testament. They not only point to one great object, but they were conducted by one person, who, as Justin Martyr speaks, although he did at length for good reasons take to himself a body, yet had always been doing good to the human race: for no excellent thing was ever performed by men without the presence of this Divine Person. You may expect then to find in the Old and New Testament, that unity of design, that correspondence and analogy of parts which mark all the schemes of a superior enlightened mind. According to this proposition, the glorious person who had established the dispensation of the Old Testament, is not made to withdraw as soon as it comes to an end. But he appears in the New Testament under another character, with a display of more conde-

scending and more universal love, to complete the work which he had begun, and to fulfil the words of his prophets. Every thing said by them concerning the person who had sent them is applied by this proposition to the person whom they announced ; and there is a depth and perfection of wisdom in the manner of the application. As it was not necessary that the Son of God should be known while the Old Testament dispensation existed, we find that the ancient Jews had very imperfect conceptions of his nature. But when he came in the flesh, he took off the veil from the ancient Scriptures. The Old Testament now appears to be full of Jesus Christ ; and all the revelations, from the beginning of the world, collected and interpreted by their application to him, redound to the honour, and illustrate the original dignity of the angel of the covenant.

CHAPTER VI.

DOCTRINE CONCERNING THE PERSON OF CHRIST TAUGHT DURING HIS LIFE.

I HAVE considered both those passages of Scripture, which teach plainly that Jesus existed before he was born of Mary, and those which ascribe certain actions to him in his pre-existent state. The manner in which these actions are described, not only contains a clear refutation of the first opinion concerning the person of Christ, but seems intended to convey an impression that he is not a creature; and with the prejudice arising from this impression, we now proceed to attend to those passages of Scripture which are to direct us in forming a conception of his original dignity.

Dr. Clarke, in his Introduction to the Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, expresses himself thus: "'Tis a thing very destructive of religion, and the cause of almost all divisions amongst Christians, when young persons, at their first entering upon the study of divinity, look upon human and perhaps modern forms of speaking, as the rule of their faith; understanding those also according to the accidental sound of the words, or according to the notions which happen at any particular time to prevail in the world, and then picking out, as proofs, some few single texts of Scripture, which, to minds already strongly prejudiced, must needs seem to sound, or may easily be accommodated, the same way; while they attend not impartially to the whole scope and general tenor of Scripture. Whereas on the contrary were the whole Scriptures first thoroughly studied, and seriously considered, as the rule and only rule of truth in matters of religion; and the sense of all human forms and expressions deduced from thence, the greatest part of errors, at least of uncharitable divisions, might in all probability have been prevented."

Dr. Clarke speaks the language of all true Protestants, when he says that the Scriptures, thoroughly studied and seriously considered, are the rule, and the only rule of truth in matters of religion. He speaks like a sound critic, when he says that texts ought not to be understood according to the accidental sound of the words, or according to the notions which happen at any particular time to prevail. But it does not appear to me how we can attain a certain knowledge of the whole scope and general tenor of Scripture, without a close examination of particular texts. In every inquiry we find it necessary to guard against the errors which arise from partial views, by comparing different parts of the subject, and by correcting the conclusions which had been too hastily formed. But still, notwithstanding

this danger, the scientific method of arriving at truth in all subjects is to proceed by an induction of particulars to an apprehension of the whole; and in the study of theology, which is in truth the study of the Scriptures, any notions formed of the doctrine contained in them must be loose and precarious, unless you investigate by sound criticism the amount of words and phrases. Although therefore I consider the collection of texts from the New Testament relative to the doctrine of the Trinity, which Dr. Clarke has made the groundwork of his propositions, as a most useful help to any one who sets himself to examine the subject, I do think that by following the method of studying it which he recommends, there is a danger of being prevented, by a phraseology which runs through many of the texts, from receiving the obvious sense of others. If, because it is said in numberless places that the Son is sent by the Father, and came to do the will of the Father, and that all things are given him by God, we infer that there is an inferiority to God in his nature, and afterwards find this inference in direct opposition to those texts, which teach that there is an equality, we have reason to presume that we have committed a mistake; and we are reminded, that the proper method of proceeding was not to draw a conclusion from a general impression, but to begin with ascertaining the sense of particular texts, and to rest in that conclusion which affords a consistent interpretation of all the passages that relate to the same subject.

I said, indeed, that we bring with us to the part of the subject upon which we are now entering, an impression that Jesus is not a creature. But this is an impression suggested by a careful and patient examination of those texts in which he is described as the Creator of the world, and by the whole tenor of those parts of the Old and New Testament, in which he is described as the Person by whom all intercourse between the Deity and the human race has been conducted. It is impossible to make progress in any subject without forming some opinion as we advance. If that opinion receive no support in the further prosecution of the subject, it rests upon its original foundation. If it be contradicted, we ought to revise the grounds of it, that we may discover where the mistake lies: but if it be found to coincide with the amount of future researches, it receives light and confirmation from this concurrence of evidence.

These are the principles upon which I am to proceed in a critical examination of those texts of the New Testament, the true meaning of which must decide the question between the second and third opinions concerning the person of Christ. But as the texts are found chiefly in the Epistles, which were not written for twenty years after our Lord's death, I think it proper to begin with an historical view of the manner in which the doctrine concerning his person was taught during his life.

It is manifest to any one who reads the gospels, that our Lord did not unfold all the truths of his religion at once to his disciples. In condescension to the narrowness of their views, and the strength of their prejudices, there was a preparation by which he led them on, as they were able to bear it, to points of difficult apprehension. When we observe that he never spoke plainly of his sufferings, till they had declared their faith in him as the Messiah—that the future extension

of his religion was intimated to them in parables—that they were not permitted before his death to preach the gospel to any but Jews—and that their expectations of a temporal kingdom continued till his ascension, we cannot doubt that some of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity were very imperfectly known by the apostles while our Lord was with them; and we are not surprised to find these words in his last discourse to them, “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.”* If he was truly God, there was a peculiar fitness in the reserve with which he chose to reveal the dignity of his person. He appeared as a man, that he might converse familiarly with his brethren—that, by leading a life of sorrow, he might go before his companions in the practice of those virtues which they also were to be required to exercise—and that, by falling in due time a victim to the malice of his enemies, he might accomplish the salvation of the world. For these purposes, the veil of humanity was assumed; and if it was indeed the Godhead which that veil concealed from the eyes of ordinary beholders, the same purposes required that those persons who were continually around the person of Jesus, should have, during his life, only an indistinct impression of the glory and majesty of him with whom they conversed—and that the clear knowledge that he was God, should be conveyed to their minds after his death, by that recollection and explication of his words, which they were to derive from the illumination of his Spirit. After he had ascended to heaven, they could not think too highly of his character; and their conceptions of the wisdom and grace of their Master would be very much raised, when they found that those words, the full force of which they understood not at the time when they were spoken, admitted of an interpretation every way suited to the exalted notions which they were taught by the Spirit to entertain concerning the dignity of him from whom they had proceeded.

This appears to be the plan which the wisdom of God followed in revealing this subject. We find, during the life of Jesus, intimations of the superiority of his character, such as are not only perfectly consistent with the future revelation that he is God, but such as nothing less than that revelation can fully explain. At the same time, we find both the apostles and Jews rather confounded than enlightened by these intimations; and it is not in the conversations recorded in the Gospels, but in the expressions used by the authors of them, or by the other apostles after the day of Pentecost, that we discern their knowledge of the character of their Master. By giving a short connected view of these previous intimations, I shall follow the preparation which our Lord used in showing himself to his disciples.

All the circumstances which attended the birth of Jesus, marked him out as an extraordinary person. The annunciation by the angel of the Lord, first to Mary, and afterwards to Joseph—the reference to ancient prophecy, in the language which the angel used—the glory which shone around the shepherds of Bethlehem at the time of the birth—and the song of the multitude of the heavenly host which was with the angel that spake—together with the visit of the wise men, who, led by a star in the East, “came to Jerusalem to worship him

* John xvi. 12.

that was born King of the Jews,"—all these things could not fail to be noised abroad; they were matter of wonder to those that heard them, and Mary, not understanding what they meant, "kept all these things," we are told, "and pondered them in her heart." The first direct explication of them was at the baptism of Jesus. John, whose mother Elizabeth was a relation of Mary, had been born a few months before Jesus. The Angel, who appeared to his father Zacharias the priest, had said that the son who was to be born "should go before the Lord God of Israel in the spirit and power of Elias:" and Zacharias, instructed by the temporary dumbness, which had been the punishment of his unbelief, to repose entire confidence in the words of the angel, said, after John was born, "Thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways."* When John was about thirty, "the word of God came unto him," and he appeared, according to the destination of ancient prophecy applied to him at his birth, "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord."† Although personally acquainted with Jesus, John knew not that he was the Messiah, till taught by these words, in what manner he was to be distinguished from others: "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."‡ Soon after this revelation was made to John, Jesus came with the multitude to be baptized of John, who preached the baptism of repentance; and as he went up out of the water, the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended, either in the shape of a dove, or in the manner in which a dove descends, and lighted upon him. "And lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Instantly John recognized Jesus as the person to whom he was sent to bear witness. Having seen, he "bare record, that this is the Son of God," and pointed out Jesus as such to the Jews.§

It appears impossible to me, that any person, who, to all the circumstances that had conspired to raise the highest expectations concerning Jesus, joins the solemnity and splendor of that appearance by which he is made known to John, his forerunner, can interpret the words uttered by the voice from heaven in an inferior metaphorical sense, or can give them any other than that exalted import which they naturally bear, and which is suggested by the use of them in ancient prophecy. This opinion founded upon the circumstances of the case is confirmed by two critical remarks which deserve attention. The one is, that in all the three Evangelists who record them, the article is prefixed both to the substantive and the adjective, Matt. iii. 17, *οὗτος ὅστις ἐνός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός*; the most discriminating mode of expression that could be employed, as if to separate Jesus from every other who at any time had received the appellation of the Son of God, and to lead back the thoughts of the hearers to the prophecies in which the Messiah had been announced under that name. This is that Son of mine who is the beloved. The other critical remark is, that, in all the three Evangelists, the verb of the second clause, in whom I am

* Luke ch. i.

† John i. 33.

‡ Luke iii. 3—6.

§ Mat. iii. 16, 17. John i. 34.

well pleased, is in the first aorist, *ἐν ᾧ εὐδοκῆσα*. Now, although we often render the Greek aorist by the English present, yet this can be done with propriety only when the proposition is equally true whether it be stated in the present, in the past, or in the future time. *Τὰς μὲν τῶν φανύων συνθηκῆς ὀλίγος χρόνος διέλυσεν*. It matters nothing to the truth or significancy of this proposition, in what time you translate *διέλυσεν*; for a short space of time has dissolved the connexions of the wicked in past ages, does dissolve them in our days, and will dissolve them in the days of our posterity. This force of the Greek indefinite tense is preserved in English by introducing the adverb *always*. A short space of time always dissolves the connexions of the wicked.* And thus the analogy of the Greek language requires us not only to consider the name, Son of God, as applied in a peculiar sense to Jesus, but also to refer to the expression used at his baptism, to that intercourse which had subsisted between the Father and the Son, before this name was announced to men.

This voice from heaven which John heard appeared to have conveyed to his mind the most exalted apprehensions of that Person whom it marked out to him. For the words in which he afterwards speaks of Jesus correspond to the third opinion concerning his Person, rather than to the second. "He that cometh from above is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand."† We cannot say that the full meaning of the expression was known to the apostles, and that they could not consider a man, to whom such a name had been given in such a manner, as merely a man whom God had sent. And yet, when we find them introducing at different times into declarations of their faith, this expression, Thou art the Son of the living God, it is natural to suppose that they referred to the voice heard at his baptism. There is one place in John's Gospel, where our Lord appears to found an argument for his divine mission upon this voice. John v. 37, 38. He had spoken of the Witness which he received from John, and of the works that he did, which bare witness that the Father had sent him: and he adds, according to our translation, "And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And ye have not his word abiding in you; for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not." A different translation of these verses, which had been suggested by others, and which always appeared to me probable, is adopted and ably defended by Dr. Campbell. His translation is, "Nay, the Father who sent me, hath himself attested me. Did ye never hear his voice, or see his form? Or have ye forgotten his declarations, that ye believe not him whom he hath commissioned?" The reader will observe, says Dr. Campbell, in a note, that the two clauses which are rendered in the English Bible as declarations, are in this version translated as questions. The difference in the original is only in the pointing. That they ought to be so read, we need not, in my opinion, stronger evidence, than that they throw much light upon the whole passage, which, read in the

* Dalzel's Coll. Græca Majora, Notæ in Herod. 19, 6. Ed. 1808.

† John iii. 31, 32, 35.

common way, is both dark and ill-connected. Our Lord here refers them to the testimony given of him at his baptism; and, when you read the two clauses as questions, all the chief circumstances attending that memorable testimony are exactly pointed out. Have ye never heard his voice, *φωνή ἐκ τῶν οὐρανῶν*, nor seen his form—the *σωματικὸν εἶδος*, in which Luke says the Holy Ghost descended? And have ye not his declaration abiding in you, *τον λόγον*, the words which were spoken at that time?

There appears to me very strong internal evidence for the correction proposed by Dr. Campbell, according to which our Lord here refers to the *λόγος*, the words uttered at his baptism, as his warrant for calling himself the Son of God. There is no doubt that he takes that name to himself in an eminent sense, both in his discourses with his disciples, with Nicodemus, a master in Israel, with the people of the Jews, and at his trial, when, being asked by the High Priest, “Art thou the Son of God?” he acknowledged that he was: a confession which, according to the sense affixed to the question by those who put it, was direct blasphemy. “What need we any further witnesses,” said the High Priest: “ye have heard the blasphemy.” It is very remarkable, that although our Lord seems to delight in calling the Almighty, when he is speaking of him to the disciples, your Father, your heavenly Father, a gracious name most suitable to the discoveries of his religion; and although, in the prayer which he taught them to use, the address is, “Our Father which art in heaven,” yet he never uses the expression our Father in such a manner as to include himself with them. All his discourse implies that God is his Father, in a sense different from that in which he is the Father of all mankind; and the form of his expression in one place seems chosen to mark the distinction, John xx. 17, “Go tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God, and your God.” Indeed the strongest proofs of the divinity of Jesus, that are found in his own words, arise from the manner in which he speaks of the connexion between his Father and him. “All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.”* Here the Father and the Son are held forth as alike incomprehensible to mortals. “What things soever the Father doth, these doth the Son likewise.”† Here is an exact likeness in their works. *Εγὼ καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ἐν ἐσμέν.* “I and the Father are one.”‡ The argument arising from the two last passages becomes much stronger than it appears at the first hearing them, when you attend to the circumstances in which the declarations were made. In the fifth chapter of John, our Lord, being accused of breaking the Sabbath, because upon that day he made a man whole, makes this apology, v. 17: *Ὁ πατὴρ μου ἕως αὐτοῦ ἐργαζεται, καὶ ἔργαζομαι.* “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work,” *i. e.* My Father, who rested on the seventh day from the work of creation, never rests from the work of preserving and blessing his creatures; and I, after his example, do works of mercy on the Sabbath day. The Jews were offended with this saying, because they conceived it to imply that Jesus called God

* Mat. xi. 27.

† John v. 19

‡ John x. 30.

πατέρα ἰδιον, which means much more than our translation has expressed, “said that God was his Father.” Ἰδιον πατέρα means his Father, in a sense appropriated to him. Ἰδιος is opposed to κοινος. And I call him ἰδιος πατήρ, who is not the Father of others as well as of me, but who is the Father of me only. From his calling God peculiarly his Father, they inferred that he made himself equal with God; and therefore they sought to kill him. Attempts have been made to give a different interpretation to the 18th verse. But they appear to me so forced that I will not recite them. What the verse conveys to every plain reader is this, that the Jews, although they looked up to God as the father of their nation, considered it as blasphemy in any individual to call God in a peculiar manner his Father, because this was putting in a claim to that title, the Son of God, which seems to imply a sameness or equality of nature with the Supreme Being, and which they were taught by their Scriptures to regard with the highest reverence. But our Lord, instead of giving such an explication of his words as might exculpate him from this charge of blasphemy, subjoins in his answer, other expressions which appear to be a direct assertion of that equality with God, which the Jews conceived to be implied in his calling God peculiarly his Father. He says, “What things soever the Father doth, these also doth the Son likewise,” assuming the omnipotence of God. He says, “The Father sheweth the Son all things that himself doth,” making his knowledge commensurate with the works of God. He says, “The Son quickeneth whom he will. As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.” It is acknowledged in all these expressions, that whatsoever the Son has is communicated to him by the Father; and this is implied in the very name the Son of God. But if this communication be not of so peculiar a kind as to imply an equality with God, a sameness of nature and perfections, there is not only an unwarrantable presumption in the words of our Lord, but in the circumstances in which they were uttered, there is an equivocation inconsistent with the sincerity of an honest man.

This argument is confirmed by attending to a similar passage in the 10th chapter of John. Our Lord, speaking of that assurance of eternal life which his religion conveys to his disciples, says, x. 29, 30, “They shall never perish. My Father which gave them me is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones to stone him.” And they assign as the reason for so doing, the very same which John had mentioned in the fifth chapter: “We stone thee for blasphemy, because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.” Our Lord’s answer is, “Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods? If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the Scriptures cannot be broken, *i. e.* if the language of Scripture be unexceptionable, say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?” These words are quoted in support of their opinion, by those who hold that our Saviour is called the Son of God, purely upon account of the commission which he received. But the force of the argument, and the consistency of the discourses, require us to affix a much higher meaning to that expression. Our Lord is reason-

ing *a fortiori*. He vindicates himself from the charge of blasphemy, in calling himself the Son of God, because even those who hold civil offices upon earth, are called in Scripture gods. But that he might not appear to put himself upon a level with them, and to retract his former assertion, "I and the Father are one," he not only calls himself, "him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world," which implies that he had a being, and that God was his Father before he was sent; but he subjoins, "If I do not the works of my Father believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him;" expressions which appear to be equivalent to his former assertion, "I and the Father are one," and which were certainly understood by the Jews in that sense; for, as soon as he had uttered them, "they sought again to take him." The full argument of our Lord is, that the union between the Father and him gives him a much better title to the name of the Son of God than any office can give men to the name gods: and thus at the very time that he shelters himself from the charge of blasphemy under this Scripture expression, he intimates repeatedly, in the hearing of those who accused him of blasphemy for what he said, the superior dignity of his person.

As our Lord, in this emphatical manner, took to himself the name of the Son of God, so there is a remarkable passage in which he guards those with whom he conversed, against supposing that his being called the Son of David, implied a sameness of nature, or an equality in point of dignity with his earthly progenitor. "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, the son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool. If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? And no man was able to answer him a word."* It is known to those who have read psalm ex. in the original, that although the Septuagint version be *ειπεν ὁ Κυριος τῷ Κυρίῳ μου*, and our English translation be "The Lord said unto my Lord;" yet the word in the nominative is different from that which is in the dative. The nominative is Jehovah, the incommunicable name of God expressing his necessary existence. The dative is Adonai, a word expressing dominion or sovereignty. It admits, therefore, of being construed with a possessive pronoun, my Lord; and it may denote different kinds and degrees of dominion. The difficulty, then, is not what our translations might suggest, that the same name Lord is applied to the Messiah as to the Supreme Being. But it lies here. David, a Sovereign Prince, who had no earthly superior, who was taught by the promise of God to consider the Messiah as his descendant, yet many ages before the Messiah was born, calls him "My Lord;" an expression which is a direct acknowledgment of his inferiority to his own descendant, and which implies that the Messiah existed in a superior nature before he descended from him. Our Lord draws the attention of the Pharisees to this difficulty in their own Scriptures, which they seem to have overlooked, and which they were unable

* Matth. xxii. 41—46.

to solve. He could not solve it, without unfolding to them what he chose at present only obscurely to intimate. But he leaves it with them as a proof drawn from an authority which they did not question, that if they considered the Messiah as of no higher extraction than a son of David, they were mistaken.

The whole conduct of our Lord tended to confirm the impression arising from this manner in which he spake of himself. Amidst all the simplicity, the humility, and condescension of his life, there was an unaffected dignity uniformly supported in his words and actions, which mark him, to an unprejudiced observer, as more than man. He discovered, upon many occasions, that knowledge of the secret workings of the heart, and that acquaintance with transactions the most retired from the eyes of men, which constitute a large part of the divine omniscience. And you cannot suppose, that repeated displays of this omniscience would be overlooked by those who were continually with him, when you observe the effect which one instance produced; John i. 47, "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile. Nathanael saith, whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered, before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee;" referring probably to some act of secret devotion, or of private beneficence. Nathanael, finding that this stranger knew a transaction which no eye had seen, and no ear had heard from him, immediately exclaims, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." In our Lord's miracles there was an ease and readiness which showed that he exerted inherent powers, and a command over nature which indicates its Lord. Upon some occasions he chose, for the instruction of the spectators, to direct their attention to his Father, from whom he acknowledged that he received all power; but at other times, he healed diseases, or raised the dead by a word. "I will, be thou clean." "Young man," speaking to him that was dead, "I say unto thee, arise." He taught men to infer from all his works, the union between his Father and him: and he interprets one of his miracles as a direct proof of his having power to do what belongs to God alone. Mark ii. Knowing, probably, that the sick of the palsy who was brought to him was humbled by disease, and prepared to receive with contrition the Lord's Christ, he said to him, "Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." The scribes, who were sitting by, reasoned in their hearts, "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" He discerned their reasonings, and he answered them by saying, "Whether is it easier to say, thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say, arise, and take up thy bed and walk?" The same divine power which would have rendered the one of these sayings, when pronounced by me, effectual, entitles me to use the other: "And therefore, that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, I say unto thee, arise." Here, then, Jesus takes to himself a right to forgive sins; that prerogative which the scribes, both by reason, and by express declarations of their own scriptures, were taught to consider as belonging exclusively to God.

Such are the proofs of the superior nature of Jesus, which were laid before the world during his abode upon earth. The ablest critics on the New Testament have not agreed as to the inference which

the apostles drew from these proofs, whether a belief of the divinity of Jesus accompanied their belief of his being the Messiah. The question appears to me problematical, and I do not think that the New Testament contains sufficient evidence to decide the point. But it is not of great importance. I observed, that the intimations of the divinity of our Lord, given during his life, were purposely obscure; and the apostles brought with them such prejudices, and met with such disappointment in their expectations, that it is no wonder if they did not reason from these intimations as they might have done. But there is recorded in the conclusion of the Gospel of John a declaration made by one of the apostles, after the resurrection of Jesus, of his having then attained the knowledge of that doctrine, which all these intimations seem intended to prepare them for receiving. Thomas, after his scruples were removed, answered and said to Jesus, John xx. 28, ὁ Κυριος μου, καὶ ὁ Θεος μου; a conjunction of words probably from Ps. xxxv. 23, "Awake to my judgment, my God, and my Lord." The Socinians consider the words of Thomas as an exclamation of surprise upon seeing Jesus alive, or of gratitude to God who had raised him: My God and my Lord hath done this. But you will observe, it is expressly said that these words are addressed to Jesus, as an answer to what he had spoken, ἀπεχρίθη καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ; and our Lord, in his reply, considers them as a confession of Thomas's faith; "Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Either, therefore, the nominative is here as in many other places equivalent to the vocative, or the ellipsis is to be supplied by εὐ σὺ. It is so natural to interpret these words as a declaration of Thomas's believing Jesus to be his God, that if our Lord had wished them not to be so understood, the ambiguity required a correction from him. But by accepting this declaration, and pronouncing his blessing upon those who, without the same evidence of sense, should make the same declaration, he approves of what Thomas had said, according to the obvious sense of the words, and teaches his followers, in succeeding ages, to acknowledge him not only as their Master or Lord, but as their God.

CHAPTER VII.

DIRECT PROOFS THAT CHRIST IS GOD.

THE confession made by the apostle Thomas may be considered as an introduction to those plain assertions of the divinity of Jesus, which are found in the writings of the apostles after the ascension of their Master : and the words of that confession direct us to attend, in the first place, to those passages in which Jesus Christ is called God. But, before we begin to examine them particularly, it is proper to advert to a difficulty attending the argument that is founded upon them.

SECTION I.

IF the name, God, were in Scripture appropriated exclusively to the Supreme Being, those passages of the New Testament in which it is applied to Jesus Christ, would afford an unequivocal proof that he is not a creature. But the fact is, that although God, in the strict and proper sense of that word, is the name of the Almighty, there is a loose or figurative sense, in which the use of it is very much extended. Admiration, which delights in magnifying its objects, has often prompted men to speak of their fellow-creatures in language to which no mortal is entitled. The expression in Homer, *θεοειδὲς φῶς*, we have copied in the epithets god-like and divine. By frequent use and by the progress of science these epithets have come to be regarded as figures of speech. But they were originally dictated by a principle which is most observable in ruder states of society, a proneness to consider all who discover eminent qualities, or extraordinary powers, as raised above the condition of human nature. The supposed existence of many of the heathen gods may be traced to this principle. The protectors and benefactors of their country, who had been admired during their life, were adored after their death, *i. e.* were enrolled amongst those higher orders of being, to whom it was conceived they had always been assimilated. Nay, there were instances in which the extravagance of flattery, and the excess of vanity which that flattery nourished, conspired in ascribing to a mortal, even while he remained upon earth, the name and honours of a god. The Scriptures, which must speak according to the sentiments and usages of those who are addressed, have adopted, in numberless places, this popular extension of the name of the Su-

preme Being. The first commandment is, Thou shalt have no other gods before me, as if any other could exist. The name, gods, is uniformly given in the Old Testament to those fictitious objects of worship before which the nations bowed; and the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. viii. 5, at the very time that he says, "An idol is nothing in the world, and there is none other God but one," adds, "Though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, as there be gods many." The Hebrew word for gods is applied to the angels "who excel in strength," and who "dwell in heaven."* To rulers, because they are exalted above their subjects, it is said, "Ye are gods."† The belly of the sensualists, to the service of which they are devoted, is called their god:‡ and the Almighty himself says to Moses, Exod. vii. 1, "See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh, and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet," *i. e.* the king shall be astonished at the displays of thy power; and the orders which thou shalt issue to him shall be delivered by the mouth of Aaron, who shall thus be thy prophet to Pharaoh.

This extended figurative use of the name of God has suggested, to those who hold Jesus to be an exalted creature, the following system, which I give in the words of the author of the *Essay on Spirit*, p. 89. "As the self-existent cause, of whom are all things, can alone be properly called God, when this title is given in the Scriptures to any other being but the Father, we are to understand it only as expressive of some god-like power which hath been given or communicated to that being by God the Father. In this sense the application may be attributed to the Son, because, when all power in heaven and earth was given to him, he was made a god to those beings over whom that power was given." This system is supported by a remark borrowed from Sir Isaac Newton, and adopted by Dr. Clarke. "God," says Sir Isaac, "is a relative term, which has reference to subjects; and the word deity denotes the dominion of God over subjects;" and again, "we worship and adore God on account of his dominion." In like manner, Dr. Clarke, having laid it down as the 25th proposition in his scripture-doctrine of the Trinity, "The reason why the Son, in the Old Testament, is sometimes styled God, is not upon account of his metaphysical substance, how divine soever, but of his relative attributes and divine authority, communicated to him from the Father over us"—supports the proposition in the notes by the following reason—"The word God, when spoken of the Father himself, is never intended in Scripture to express philosophically his abstract metaphysical attributes, but to raise in us a notion of his attributes relative to us, his supreme dominion, authority, power, justice, goodness," &c. However profound the respect is which every one, who has imbibed the rudiments of science, must entertain for the name of Sir Isaac Newton, you will probably find reason to think, when you examine his writings upon subjects not capable of strict demonstration, that in them, according to the expression used by Bishop Horsley, the editor of his mathematical works, the great Newton went out like a common man. It has been shown by Dr. Waterland, in his *Vindication of Christ's Divinity*, and by Dr. Ran-

* Psalm viii. 5.

† Psalm lxxxii. 6.

‡ Phil. iii. 19.

dolph, in his Vindication of the Trinity, that the name God, when applied in Scripture to the Supreme Being, involves in it the notion of the excellence of his nature, his wisdom, power, eternity, and all-sufficiency. I need not mention any other Scripture-proof of this, than that decisive passage in Psalm xc.—“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.” Dr. Waterland observes, that although dominion enters into the notion of God, yet it is the excellence of the divine nature manifested to us in his works, which is the object of our adoration, and the foundation of his dominion over us: so that the whole idea of God is that of an eternal, unchangeable, almighty Ruler and Protector. “If,” says Dr. Randolph, p. 77, “God be only a relative term, which has reference to subjects, it follows, that when there were no subjects, there was no God; and, consequently, either the creatures must have been some of them eternal, or there must have been a time when there was no God. Again, as the creatures are none of them necessarily existent, it will follow that God himself does not exist necessarily; and if we suppose God to annihilate all creatures, he would thereby annihilate his own Deity, and cease to be God.”

Although this reasoning should satisfy you that the word God is not merely a relative term, but that, in its proper sense, it implies a transcendent and independent excellence of nature, yet, at the same time, you will perceive, that as it does imply dominion founded upon this excellence of nature, it may be used relatively. My God, is that being whose infinite perfections are employed in my protection, and are an object of trust and submission to me. You will perceive, also, from this account of its true meaning, how it may be applied in a loose figurative sense to those who resemble the Supreme Being in any part of the whole idea annexed to the word; who have either attained any measure of the excellence of his nature, or who are intrusted by him with the exercise of any portion of his universal dominion.

It appears, from what has been said, that much circumspection is necessary in drawing an argument for the divinity of Jesus from those passages in which he is styled God; but it does not follow that the argument is necessarily inconclusive. There is hardly any word which is not occasionally used in a sense somewhat loose and figurative. It is one of the offices of sound criticism, to judge whether we are to interpret words and phrases more or less strictly; and every accurate composition furnishes some discriminating circumstances which guide us in making this judgment. No person can be led into so gross a mistake as to think Moses truly a god, when the Almighty says to him,—“See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh;” or civil magistrates truly partakers of a divine nature, when we read, “I said ye are gods; but ye shall die like men;” or the angels, however exalted above men, really like to God, when we read a command given them to worship another being; or the idols, before whom the nations bowed, worthy of trust, when the prophets, at the same time that they call them gods, say they are vanity, the work of errors, and have no power to do good or evil. It may be expected, from the analogy of these instances, that if this name be given in an improper

figurative sense to any other person, more especially if it be often so given, we shall, in some way, be effectually guarded against mistake. The preservative, indeed, it has been said, against applying the term God in the highest sense to that person who is often called God, is to be found in those general declarations of Scripture that there is but one God: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our Lord is one Lord." "There is none good but one, that is God." But a little attention will satisfy you that this preservative is not sufficient; for the very person who is often called God in the New Testament, says, "I and the Father are one;" and this declaration, taken in conjunction with the expressions of the Divine unity, has appeared to many pious Christians, and to many of the most able and inquisitive men in all ages, to teach this system, that although there be but one God, the Person to whom that name is often given in the New Testament, is, in the highest sense of the word, God. The general preservative being thus insufficient to guard against mistake, if the highest sense of the word does not belong to that Person, there was much occasion for some marks of inferiority in the manner of its being applied to him which might suggest a lower sense. But if, instead of meeting with such marks we meet with circumstances in the manner of his being called God, which imply that the word, in the strict and most exalted sense, belongs to him; and if the interpretation which we are thus led to give to the name correspond with other scripture proofs of the Divinity of the Person to whom it is applied, we cannot avoid concluding, that the Scriptures, by calling Jesus Christ God, meant to teach us that he is God.

Let your examination of the texts which are commonly alleged for this purpose be scrupulous and suspicious. Every point of importance ought to be carefully examined; and it is the great advantage which accrues from diversity of opinion, that you are both guarded against that supine indolence with which assent is yielded to points in which men are generally agreed, and that you are furnished with the best means of attaining the truth, by having an opportunity of opposing to one another the arguments which very able men have adduced upon either side. I shall not, therefore, barely enumerate the texts in which Jesus is plainly called God, but I shall endeavour, in canvassing their meaning, to exhibit a specimen of that kind of scripture-criticism, without the continued exercise of which you can neither arrive at certainty, nor give a good reason of your own opinions upon any of the disputed questions of theology.

1. The first text is contained in that passage at the beginning of John's Gospel, which has already been fully explained. The whole passage was then vindicated, from the Sabellian interpretation, by showing that $\delta \lambda \omicron \gamma \omicron \varsigma$ is a distinct person from the Father, the same who is called in the 17th verse Jesus Christ. It was observed that in the second clause of the first verse, $\delta \lambda \omicron \gamma \omicron \varsigma \eta \nu \pi \rho \omicron \varsigma \tau \omicron \nu \Theta \epsilon \omicron \nu$, the word $\Theta \epsilon \omicron \varsigma$ occurs in the highest sense; and that, as the form of the apostle's expression is to make the last word of one clause the first word of the succeeding, nothing but a purpose to mislead could have induced him, without any warning, to apply the name God to Jesus Christ in the beginning of the third clause, if he had meant it to be understood there in a sense different from that in which he had used it at the end of the

second. It was observed, further, that the want of the article makes no essential difference, both because the analogy of the Greek language requires that the article should be prefixed to the subject rather than to the predicate of a proposition; and also, because Θεός, without the article, in the following verses of this chapter, and in many other places, is used in the highest sense. I have only to add to these observations, that Θεός cannot be understood here merely as a relative term, because it is not said Θεός ἐγένετο ὁ λόγος, the word became, or was made God after the world was created; but Θεός ἦν ὁ λόγος, the word was God in the beginning, *i. e.* before he proceeded to make any thing, when there were no creatures and no subjects. Even Dr. Clarke, therefore, is obliged to paraphrase this expression thus: “Partaker of divine power and glory with and from the Father, not only before he was made flesh, or became man, but also before the world was.” Now, if the manner in which the name God is here given to Jesus implies that the excellencies of the Divine nature belonged to him in the beginning when no creatures existed, and if there is no limitation of the degree in which he then possessed these excellencies, we seem warranted, by fair construction of the apostle’s words, to infer from his being called God, that he is God.

2. The second passage is Acts xx. 28. Προσεχετε οὖν ἑαυτοῖς, καὶ παντὶ τῷ ποιμνί, ἐν ᾧ ἡμᾶς τὸ Πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἐθετο ἐπισκοπους, ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἣν περιποιήσατο διὰ τοῦ ἰδίου αἵματος. The nominative to περιποιήσατο, which is not expressed in the Greek, and is supplied in our translation by the pronoun he, must be taken from the nearest substantive, Θεοῦ. There is no other noun in the whole verse which admits of being made the nominative. But Θεοῦ cannot here mean the Father; for the doctrine of the gospel is, that we are redeemed or purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ. This is an action appropriated to him in all the descriptions of the method of our salvation. He took a body that he might shed his blood for us; and the phrase ἰδίον αἷμα, the blood which was proper, peculiar to him, is used also in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and there opposed to αἷμα ἄλλοτρίον, Heb. ix. 12, 25, to show that it was truly the blood of Christ, and of no other person, that was shed. The nominative to περιποιήσατο, therefore, whatever the word be, must mean Jesus Christ; and consequently in this place he is called God.

But it is proper to mention that the MSS. of the New Testament do not agree in reading Θεοῦ. Grotius conjectures that the original reading was Χριστοῦ, abbreviated into Χου, and that out of Χου came Θεου, for Θεοῦ. But this conjecture is unsupported by any authority. Mr. Mill, who, in his most valuable edition of the Greek Testament, has collected the various readings, and mentioned the authorities by which every one of them is supported, informs us that some read χριστον; others χριστον καὶ Θεον; others, Θεον. Mr. Mill, who had access to judge of all the manuscripts, versions, and quotations in favour of each of the three, has no difficulty in preferring Θεον as the best supported. Griesbach, the latest editor of the New Testament, prefers χριστον, and says it is supported by the best and most ancient manuscripts, by the most ancient versions, and by the fathers. There is not any reason, from the nature of the thing, for giving up our reading, ἐκκλησία Θεου; it is a very common conjunction of words in the

New Testament, and God's purchasing the church with his own blood is an expression fully justified by the perfect union between the divine and human nature of Christ. At the same time, as *αἰετον* appears to be a very ancient reading, which may be traced as far back as the time of Irenæus, in the second century, the present reading, however probable, cannot be certainly known to have been that which proceeded from the apostle; and no man who is guided purely by the love of truth, would choose to rest the divinity of our Saviour upon such questionable ground.

3. With regard to the next passage, Rom. ix. 5, there is no difficulty of this kind. Upon the authority of Mill, I say that all the manuscripts, and all the ancient versions support the present reading; and Griesbach does not propose any various reading. It is quoted by the fathers both before and after the Council of Nice, as clear proof that Christ is God. And there does not appear the least ground for thinking that the text was ever read in any other manner. We are at liberty, therefore, to argue from the words as they now stand; and the only question is, what is the true interpretation of them? Dr. Clarke says, that the Greek words, being of ambiguous construction, admit of three different renderings; and I choose to quote him, because he expresses accurately and concisely what others have spread out more loosely. "They may signify either, of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came: God, who is over all, be blessed for ever, Amen: or, Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all: God be blessed for ever, Amen: or, Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all God blessed for ever, Amen." He admits that the third rendering is the most obvious. But he inclines to prefer to it either the first or second, for these two reasons. 1. *Ευλογητος* is applied in Scripture to God the Father, and seems to have been used by the Jews as his proper name; for the High Priest said to Jesus on his trial, *Σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστος, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ευλογητοῦ.** 2. *ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων Θεός* was generally understood to be a title so peculiar to God the Father, that it could not be applied to the Son, without danger of Sabellianism, *i. e.* of confounding the person of the Father and Son. These are Dr. Clarke's reasons for preferring either of the two first renderings to the third. But you will observe the present question is, whether these two titles are here applied to Christ. It is not an answer to this question, to say that they are commonly applied to the Father. For it is possible, and there may be very good reasons for so doing, that names and titles which are generally appropriated to the Father, should, in some places, be given to the Son. We may learn from such occasional applications that the two persons are equal, and yet by attending to the discriminating marks which the Scriptures furnish, we may be preserved from the danger of confounding them.

It remains, then, to be examined, whether the construction of the words warrants, or seems to require, that these titles be, in this place, applied to Christ. In order to judge of this, it will be of use to attend to the four following observations.

1. The first observation respects the clause *το κατὰ σαρχα*. The apos

* Mark xiv. 61.

tle, having expressed in the preceding verse the warmest affection for the Israelites, his countrymen, *των συγγενων μου κατα σαρχα*, enumerates in the 4th verse many privileges which distinguished his nation from every other; and he proceeds in his enumeration at the beginning of the 5th, *ων οι πατερες*, "Whose are the Fathers," i.e. Who are descended from the patriarchs, those venerable names that are found in Jewish history, *εξ ων ο Χριστος*, "and from whom is descended the Christ." The apostle adds a limiting clause, *το κατα σαρχα*, *secundum id quod pertinet ad carnem*, which implies that there were circumstances pertaining to the Christ, in respect of which he did not descend from the Israelites. Had the sentence ended here, this clause would have been a warning to the reader that the Christ was not *κατα παντα εξ αυτων*; and the reader would have been left to supply, by his knowledge of the subject derived from other sources, what the respects are in which the Christ did not descend from the Israelites.

2. But you will observe, that the sentence does not appear to end with this limiting clause, because the form of the subsequent clause refers it to *Χριστος*. *ο ων* is a relative expression, which carries you back to the preceding nominative. This kind of reference is perfectly agreeable to the analogy of the Greek language. And it is used by this apostle, 2 Cor. xi. 31, where the form of expression is very similar.

3. You will observe, that by thus referring the last clause to *Χριστος* you obtain an antithesis to *το κατα σαρχα* and you discover the reason why the apostle introduced that restricting clause, viz. that the same person, who in one respect was descended from the Israelites, was also God over all, and in that respect certainly was not of human extraction. It is a most satisfying coincidence, that the connection of the two clauses, which we have seen to be strictly grammatical, furnishes that very information concerning the person mentioned, which, without this connexion, you would be obliged to derive from other sources of knowledge. And it is usual with the apostle, in some such manner as this, to complete the description of this person, Rom. i. 3, 4, the same person is the Son of God, and the descendant of David. He was visibly the descendant of David, by the manner of his birth: He was demonstrated to be the Son of God, by that attestation which the Holy Spirit gave to his claim when he was raised from the dead; and thus, in that passage, as well as in this, the apostle himself furnishes the antithesis to the restricting clause, *κατα σαρχα*.

4. Observe, that the complete description which the apostle, according to his manner in other places, and according to the expectation raised by the limiting clause, here gives of *Χριστος*, is perfectly agreeable to the general scope of his discourse in this place. He wishes to magnify the honours of his nation; he has enumerated many of their privileges; and he concludes by crowning all of them with the mention of this, that he who is God over all, when he assumed the human form, took a body from the seed of Israel.

These four observations seem to constitute a strong internal evidence in favour of the received translation; and this evidence is confirmed, when you attend to the consequences which result from adopting either of the other two renderings. If you put a point at *κατα σαρχα*, you obtain the first; "Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came:

God, who is over all, be blessed for ever.—Amen.” By this rendering, the information concerning Χριστος is incomplete. There is introduced most abruptly a doxology to God the Father; and the form of expression in this doxology is not classical. For ὁ ων being a relative expression, which leads you back to a preceding word, the participle ων is redundant and improper, if a succeeding word, Θεος, be the nominative that agrees with it. If you put a point at παντων, you obtain what Dr. Clark calls the second rendering; “Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all: God be blessed for ever. Amen.” By this rendering, the information concerning Χριστος is more complete, and ων is referred to a preceding nominative. But still there is the abrupt introduction of a doxology to a Person who had not been mentioned in the preceding clause; and there is a barrenness in the word Θεος, which in this situation requires to be clothed with an article, ὁ Θεος εὐλογητος. It is further to be added, that the earliest Christian writers who quote this passage appear, by the course of the argument, to understand it as a plain declaration that Christ is God over all, blessed for ever. It is so rendered in the most ancient versions, and the possibility of another interpretation was not suggested till the sixteenth century. If the apostle, then, did not mean to give these titles to Jesus, he employs a form of expression, in which the natural grammatical construction of the words misled the whole Christian church for 1500 years. If he did mean to give them to Christ, then not only is this Person called God, but the name has such accompaniments that it must be understood in its most exalted sense. It is not said that he was appointed God to a particular district, but in the most absolute terms that he is God. Ὁ ων ἐπὶ παντων Θεος, as it is said of God the Father, Eph. iv. 6, εἰς Θεος καὶ πατὴρ παντων, ὁ ἐπὶ παντων. To him is ascribed the title εὐλογητος, which is used in the New Testament as the name of the Most High, and which was employed by the whole congregation of the Jews in their adoration of the God of Israel, 1 Chron. xxix. 10, Εὐλογητος εἰ, Κύριε, ὁ Θεος Ἰσραὴλ. We can place no reliance upon the language of Scripture, if there be an inferiority of nature in a Being thus designed. And the very purpose of the expressions here used seems to be, to teach us that every notion which can be conceived to be implied under the name of God, belongs to this Person as well as to the Father.

4. 1 Tim. iii. 16.—There is a difference of opinion with regard to the reading of one word in this verse. Two of the most ancient versions of the Greek Testament render the verse as if Θεος were not there. One Greek MS. has ὁ in place of Θεος; another has ἐς. It has hitherto been conjectured that Θεος is an interpolation made by some zealous Christian, who wished to add this verse to the other proofs of the divinity of our Saviour. But you will observe, that if the word be ὁ, the neuter of the relative, the antecedent is μυστηριον. i. e. the Gospel; in which case, the sense of several of the clauses will be forced and unnatural. The Gospel, “manifested in the flesh, seen of angels, received up into glory.” If the word be ἐς, either the masculine of the relative, or the pronoun of the third person, it is not manifest who is meant. Jesus Christ, to whom, by this reading, all the clauses are referred, had not been mentioned in the preceding verse; and it is not according to the manner of a perspicuous or grammatical writer,

to oblige his readers to educe an antecedent to ὅς, out of the amount of the preceding clause *μεγα εστι το της ευσεβειας μυστηριον*. There is, thus, internal evidence that some substantive noun, marking the person spoken of, is the nominative to the succession of verbs; and all the Greek copies of the New Testament, except the two mentioned above, concur in reading Θεός as the nominative. It is true that we do not find this verse formally quoted in the Arian controversy till the end of the fourth century, so that we have not an opportunity of judging by early quotations what was the original reading. But besides the authority of the most ancient Greek MSS. in support of the word Θεός, there is this further evidence for the genuineness of that reading, that if Θεός be the nominative, we can give an easy explication of every one of the clauses in perfect agreement with the analogy of facts, and the language of the most ancient writers.

Having mentioned the MSS. of the New Testament, I shall notice, as a matter of curiosity, the state of the controverted word in the Alexandrian, one of the oldest and most respectable of these MSS. There has been some controversy with regard to the age of this manuscript. But there appears good reason to believe that it was written in the fourth century, not long after the Council of Nice, by the hand of an Egyptian lady. It was carried from Alexandria to Constantinople. It was given by the Patriarch of Constantinople to Charles I. of England. It is now deposited in the British Museum; and a *fac simile*, i. e. an edition in which the form of the letter is an exact representation of the original, has been published by Mr. Woide. To understand his description of the controverted word, it should be known that abbreviations of such words as frequently occur being common in the ancient MSS. there was written, instead of Θεός, the Greek capital Θ and ς, with a line above the two letters, as a mark of the abbreviation. Mr. Woide says, "While I am writing, and looking at this place, which has been often too imprudently touched by the finger, I can hardly distinguish any thing but the short line of abbreviation, the point in the middle of the Θ now become faint, and some small remains of the circle round the point." Bishop Walton, who published a Polyglott edition of the New Testament, who has collected the various readings with great industry and fidelity, and who has mentioned the change upon this word in another MS. appears, by expressing no doubt with regard to the reading of Θεός in the Alexandrian MS. to have found it there in his time. Bishop Pearson, the very learned author of the Exposition of the Creed, says, that all the transverse line was even then so faint, that at first he thought the word was ὅς, yet, upon a narrower inspection, he saw marks which satisfied him, that there had been such a line; and Mr. Woide says, that, on first inspecting the manuscript, he agreed in opinion with Mill, although, as the Θ is now almost wholly effaced, he cannot affirm the same from the present state of the MS. From this induction of particulars, it appears to be the opinion of the most learned men who have examined this subject, that Θεός is the genuine reading of the Alexandrian MS. coeval with the MS. itself. They think that the reading ὅς, arose from the faintness of the transverse line, and that ὅς was changed into ὅ, because the neuter antecedent *μυστηριον* did not admit of a masculine relative. I observe that Gries-

bach prefers the reading $\epsilon\varsigma$, and has introduced it into the text: but I adhere to the opinion of former editors of the New Testament, supported, as they say, both by the Alexandrian, and by other very ancient MSS.; and you will observe, that if $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ be the genuine reading in this passage, it affords an instance not only of the name being applied to Jesus, but of its being applied to him, when it is the subject, not the predicate of a proposition. This is an advantage in the argument for the divinity of Jesus, because those who contend that he is called God only in an inferior sense of that word, affirm that the word may be predicated of him, but that when it is the subject of a proposition, it is always the name of the Father. Dr. Clarke's 11th Proposition is, "The Scripture, when it mentions God absolutely and by way of eminence, always means the Person of the Father, particularly when it is the subject of a proposition." The reason of the rule is, that when the word is predicated of Jesus, we are taught by this very circumstance, that it is predicated of a Person different from the Supreme Being, to give it certain limitations; but when it is the subject of a proposition, it is of necessity stated absolutely, without any sign of limitation. This would be the reason, if the Scriptures did make such a distinction in the use of this word. But here is an instance in direct opposition to Dr. Clarke's rule, where the Father cannot be meant, because he was never manifested in the flesh, where the person meant is Jesus Christ, and God is stated as the subject of the propositions affirmed concerning this person. Dr. Clarke, indeed, aware probably that the present reading cannot upon any sufficient grounds be rejected, says that it is, in reality, of no importance; for the sense is evident, that that Person was manifested in the flesh whom John, in the beginning of his Gospel, styles $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$. But this is giving up his own distinction between the subject and the predicate of a proposition. For, in John, $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ was the predicate; here $\Theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ is the subject: and, therefore, either the distinction which he made in his 11th Proposition is of no importance, or something more decisive with regard to the divinity of our Saviour is contained in this passage of Timothy than in the beginning of John's Gospel.

5. 1 John v. 20. In some manuscripts and versions, $\Sigma\epsilon\omicron\nu$ is inserted after $\alpha\lambda\theta\eta\nu\omicron\nu$ in this verse. This is of no importance to the sense. But there is a controversy with regard to the application of the last clause; and that you may judge whether it is most natural to refer it to the Father, or to his Son Jesus Christ, I shall give two interpretations of it, in the words of Dr. Clarke and Dr. Randolph. Dr. Clarke's is, "The Son of God is come, and has enlightened the eyes of our understanding, that we may know the true God; and we are in that true God by or through his Son Jesus Christ. This God, whom the Son has given us an understanding to know, is the true God, and to be in him by his Son is eternal life. This is the worship of the true God, and the way to eternal life." Dr. Randolph's is, This Jesus Christ, who hath "given us an understanding to know him that is true, is the true God and eternal life." By this interpretation, $\omicron\iota\tau\omicron\varsigma$ is referred to the antecedent immediately preceding, which is also the principal subject of the whole verse; the tautology which Dr. Clarke's paraphrase fixes upon the apostle, "The true God is the true God," is avoided; the strongest reason is given for our being in the true God

by Jesus Christ, that he himself is the true God, and so cannot mislead us : and, lastly, no more is affirmed concerning Jesus Christ than may be gathered from other places of John's writings. He is elsewhere called life.* "Eternal life," it is said, "is in the Son."† He is called God ; he is called *ὁ αληθινός*.‡ And if John meant to teach us that he who is called God is truly God, it was most natural for him to join this adjective to the substantive when speaking of the Son, in the same manner as when speaking of the Father. This text was urged in the Council of Nice against the Arians ; and they did not deny that Jesus Christ is here called the true God ; but contented themselves with saying, that if he was truly made God, he is the true God : an evasion which, joined to many others, produced the insertion of the term *ὁμοουσιος* in the orthodox creeds, as a term necessarily implying that the Son had not been made God, but is essentially God.

SECTION II.

To those passages in which the name of God is given to Jesus Christ, there naturally succeed those which ascribe to him attributes that constitute the character of the being to whom that name belongs.

The passages in which all power is ascribed to Jesus are innumerable ; and they are various and strong in point of expression. But to the argument for his divinity that is derived from the extent of his power, it is opposed by the Arian system, that the Almighty is the sole fountain of all the power that is exerted throughout the universe, that we behold various measures of power communicated to the creatures with whom we converse, that the purposes of the divine government may require that a degree, infinitely beyond any which we behold, or which we can conceive, may be imparted to that being by whom God made, by whom he saves, and by whom he is to judge the world ; but that as all the power in heaven and in earth which is given to Jesus Christ was derived from God, it redounds to the honour of Him from whom it proceeds, and does not, in fair argument, prove the divinity of him by whom it is received. This argument will appear to many to be counterbalanced by the manner in which the Scriptures speak of the power of Jesus. They will think it not likely that, if Jesus were a creature, any exertion which he was enabled to perform would be described in language by which they are assimilated, both in the greatness and facility of them, to those of the Creator. But as this language may not make the same impression upon every mind, and as it was acknowledged by Jesus, and is often said by his apostles, that he received all power from God, we require, in arguing from the attributes of Jesus to his divinity, some attributes which do not admit of the same communication as power does, some which respect rather the manner of his being, than the extent of his exertions.

You may attend, first, to the time of his being. If Jesus is the Creator of all, it follows that he existed before any of those measures

* 1 John i. 2.

† 1 John v. 11.

‡ Rev. iii. 7, 14.

of time which are deduced from the motion or succession of created objects. In this sense the Arians allow eternity to Jesus, saying that he was begotten *πρὸ πάντων αἰώνων*. But the Scriptures do not admit of any equivocation with regard to this attribute of Jesus, because the very same terms in which the eternity of God is described are applied to him; so that if the Scriptures are not sufficient to prove the eternity of the Son, neither do they prove the eternity of the Father. The ancients, all of whom applied the description of wisdom in Proverbs viii. to that person whom John calls *λογος*, argued from the similarity between Psalm xc. 2, "Before the mountains were brought forth, thou art God;" and a part of that chapter, "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." If we consider that Christ is only a beautiful personification of wisdom, we shall not admit the force of this argument. But there are plain declarations to the same purpose in the book of the Revelation. And you will observe the reason why in that book they become plain. In the conversations with the apostles which the gospels record, Jesus purposely obscured his divinity, because he was with them in the human form. But when Stephen, before his martyrdom, "looked up steadfastly to heaven, he saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." When Jesus appeared to Paul after his ascension, "there was at mid-day a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun;" and out of that light the Lord spake to Paul, saying, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." In both instances, it was the full effulgence of the Schechinah, which every Jew regarded as the visible symbol of the divine presence. In like manner, in the book of the Revelation, Jesus speaks to his servant John from heaven in his glorified state. In the description of the person whom John saw, the most splendid objects in nature are brought together to convey some conception of his majesty. The brightness of the sun is the image of his countenance; his eyes are like a flame of fire; in his hand he wields seven stars; and when he speaks, it is not the weak sound of man's voice; it is as the sound of many waters, loud, continued, and impetuous. The manner in which Jesus speaks of himself, Rev. i. 7, 8, corresponds most properly to this description of his Majesty. It has been doubted whether the person speaking in the 8th verse is the Father or the Son. But you will find when you consider the whole passage, that by applying this verse to the Father there is a most abrupt change of person; whereas the context leads us to consider Jesus Christ, the person who is described in the 7th verse, and who begins to speak to John at the 11th, as giving this account of himself in the 8th.

The only reason for not following the direction of the context, in applying this 8th verse to Jesus Christ, is that the two last titles here introduced are considered as peculiar to the Father. But it has been clearly shown that this reason proceeds upon a mistake. *Ὁ ὢν, καὶ ὁ ῥων, καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος*, is indeed used in the 4th verse, as the distinguishing character of the Father. But it is known by the learned that the amount of these words is the full exposition of the name Jehovah. Now we found, by comparing the Old and New Testament, many places in which the name Jehovah is given to Jesus; and our Lord seems to take it to himself by the peculiarity of that expression, John viii. 58,

περὶ Αβραὰμ γενεσθαι, not *ἐγὼ ἦν*, but *ἐγὼ εἰμι*. Πατοχρατωρ, a word expressing the most exalted power and the most universal dominion, the sovereign and proprietor of all, is used occasionally by the Septuagint as the translation of the same Hebrew phrase which they elsewhere render, Lord of Hosts, *κυριος δυναμεων*. But there are many places in the Old Testament, where that Hebrew phrase is applied to the angel of the covenant; and we learned from John xii. 41, that the glory of the Lord of hosts which Isaiah saw was the glory of Christ. The application, then, of the two last titles to Jesus does not afford any reason for transferring the whole verse from the Son to the Father; and the two first titles are elsewhere assumed by the Son as his.* “I am the first and the last.” “I am Α and Ω, the beginning and the end.” But these are the very descriptions which the Father gives of his eternity. Isaiah xlv. 6, “I am the first; and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.” Isaiah xliii. 10, “Before me was there no God formed, neither shall there be after me;” titles which, both by their natural import, and by their being consecrated as the description of God the Father, imply that a being to whom they are applied had no beginning, and shall have no end.

As the existence of Jesus is thus affirmed to be without beginning, so the Scriptures declare that it is not susceptible of change. An unchangeable existence is the character of Him “who is, who was, and who is to come.” And the same thing, which is clearly implied in this name, is directly expressed in that part of Psalm cii. which we found the apostle to the Hebrews in the first chapter applying to Jesus. “Thou art the same, and thy years fail not;” and to this corresponds another expression, Heb. xiii. 8, *Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἡθες καὶ σήμερον ὁ αὐτός, καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας*. For, although the Arians understand these words to mean nothing more than this, that the doctrine of Christ is unchangeable, yet it is plain that this is a figurative sense of the words; that, according to the literal interpretation, they teach that the person of Jesus Christ is the same in all times, past, present, and future; that this literal meaning is the only sense which the words in the first chapter will bear; and that the unchangeableness of his person is the surest foundation of the unchangeableness of his doctrine. It is not easy for any one who attends to these things to believe that the apostle, in commending the steadfastness with which Christians ought to adhere to the faith, would choose to introduce an expression which so naturally leads his hearers to ascribe immutability to the author of that faith, if Jesus were not truly exempt from all the vicissitudes that are inseparable from created beings.

An existence thus without beginning, and continued in all times without change, is represented also as extended through all space. While it is the essential condition of a creature to inhabit the spot assigned him, or to change his habitation according to the will of his Creator, and thus to be only in one place at one time, Jesus says of himself, John iii. 13, *ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβας, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὁ ὢν ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ*; words which, according to their most natural exposition, imply that he who came down from heaven is in heaven. He promises, Matt. xviii. 20, *ὅτι ὅτε εἴτε δύο ἢ τρεῖς συνήχημεν εἰς τὸ ἐμὸν ὄνομα, ἐκεῖ εἰμι ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν*.

* Rev. i. 17; iii. 14; xxii. 13.

He had said, that his gospel was to be preached in all the world. The fact has corresponded to the prophecy. Yet here is his promise, that in every place where his disciples are assembled, there he is; and in like manner he said to his apostles, when he was just about to ascend, Matt. xxviii. 20, *ιδου, εγω μεθ' υμων ειμι πασας τας ημερας, εως της συντελειας του αιωρος*. It cannot be said by any one who understands the terms which he uses, that omnipresence, like power, may be communicated to a being who, in some former period of his existence, did not possess it. But even this assertion is precluded by the Scriptures, which ascribe this essential attribute to Jesus from the beginning, *τα παντα εν αιτω συνεστηκε*; words which imply that his existence, since the creation, is co-extended with his works.

This extended existence is connected with the continued exercise of the most perfect intelligence. The knowledge possessed by the most exalted spirits must be limited in proportion to the bounds of the space which they inhabit. At least, their knowledge of any thing beyond that space cannot be immediate, but must be communicated to them by other beings, or acquired by investigation. But of Jesus Christ it is said, that he knoweth all things; that he knows that God who is incomprehensible to man; that he knows what is in man.* His knowledge extends to that region which is removed from the eyes of mortals, and the knowledge and judgment of which the Almighty reserves to himself as his prerogative. "Thou, even thou only," says Solomon, 1 Kings viii. 39, "knowest the hearts of all the children of men." "I the Lord," says the Almighty, Jer. xvii. 10, "search the heart, I try the reins." But Jesus, who, while he was upon earth, had discovered in numberless instances his knowledge of the heart, claims, in the book of the Revelation, this divine prerogative as his own. Rev. ii. 23. "All the churches shall know," *οτι εγω ειμι ο εξευων νεφρους και καρδιας*.—And there is a description of *ο λογος του Θεου*, Heb. iv. 12, 13, which all the ancients apply to Christ the Word, in which it is said that the Word is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart: and that there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight."

Thus we find the Scriptures ascribing to Jesus an existence without beginning, without change, without limitation, and connected, in the whole extent of space which it fills, with the exercise of the most perfect intelligence. These are the essential attributes of Deity. Measures of power may be communicated; degrees of wisdom and goodness may be imparted to created spirits: but our conceptions of God are confounded, and we lose sight of every circumstance by which he is characterized, if such a manner of existence as we have now described be common to him and any creature. When we recollect that the Person to whom this manner of existence is ascribed is the Creator of the world; that by him all the intercourse between the Deity and the human race has been carried on from the beginning; that in the Old Testament he often bears the incommunicable name Jehovah, and that in the New Testament he is called God, in the proper sense of that word: when we lay together these things, which are the premises that have been established, the conclusion

* Matt. xi. 27. John ii. 24, 25.

appears to be clear. The Scriptures mean to teach us that this Person is God : and this conclusion will be confirmed when we find that in Scripture he is worshipped as God.

SECTION III.

THIS remaining ground of argument upon the subject of our Saviour's divinity, it is proper that I should state fully, on account of the different opinions to which it has given occasion, and the extent of some of the discussions in which the different opinions have been supported.

It appears to be agreeable to reason that worship, which is the humblest expression of entire veneration, and of a sense of dependence, should be appropriated to the Supreme Being. It was the character of heathen idolatry that even those, who believed in one Being, far exalted in power and dignity above every other, gave to inferior deities, testimonies of respect and submission the same in kind with those which he received. It was the great object of the law of Moses to form a people, who, instead of going after other gods, and bowing down before them, should confine their worship to the one Lord, the God of Israel. Hence the books of the Old Testament abound with descriptions of the vanity of idols : the Almighty is there known by the name Jealous, claiming worship as his incommunicable right ; and the spirit of the whole institution is thus expressed by Isaiah xlii. 8 : " I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another." This spirit of the law seems to be incorporated into the gospel, since our Lord, upon being tempted by the devil to worship him, says, " Get thee hence, Satan ; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve."* And, upon being asked, Which is the first commandment of all ?† he began his answer thus : " The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord."

Upon a comparison of these quotations, it seems to be obvious that our Lord meant to exclude every other being from a competition with the Lord God, either in the affections of the heart, or in that expression of those affections, which is commonly called worship. Yet the Apostle to the Hebrews, i. 6, applies to Jesus Christ these words of the Psalmist, " let all the angels of God worship him." Our Lord says, John v. 23, " that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father ;" words which may imply an equality in the degree, and a sameness in the expressions of honour. The Apostle to the Philippians, ii. 10, says, " that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." During our Lord's intercourse with his apostles, the astonishment excited in their breasts by some of his works, produced expressions of reverence, which implied at least a momentary apprehension of his divine character ; and as he was carried up from them into heaven, " they worshipped him."‡

* Mat. iv. 10.

† Mark xii. 29.

‡ Luke xxiv. 52.

The last words of the martyr Stephen were, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."*

The Epistles contain many petitions which are directly addressed to Jesus, and in which his name is conjoined with that of God the Father. In the book of the Revelation, Jesus receives the adoration of all the host of heaven. The twenty-four elders, who fall down before him that sitteth on the throne, fall down before the Lamb also; and John heard every creature in heaven saying, "Blessing and glory be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever."†

The Christian church, following these examples in Scripture, introduces the name of Jesus into the earliest doxologies that are recorded. Μεθ' οὗ σοι δοξα, και τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι, and Σοι δοξα, και τῷ σὺν πατρὶ Ἰησοῦ, και τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι, are forms found in the writings of Clemens Romanus, one of the apostolical fathers; and the conclusion of the prayer of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, which is preserved in a letter from the church of Smyrna, giving an account of his sufferings in the second century, runs thus: Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ σου παιδὸς· δι' οὗ σοι σὺν αὐτῷ ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ δοξα και νῦν, και εἰς τοὺς μέλλοντας αἰῶνας. Ἀμήν. These doxologies of Clemens and Polycarp were not peculiar to them, but were agreeable to the practice of the church in their days; and from this venerable authority is derived that form of words which appears to have been used through all the ages of the Christian church, and is often repeated in the English liturgy, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

This account of the early doxologies is confirmed by Pliny, in his letter to Trajan, about the beginning of the second century, when, speaking of the Christians, he says, "Affirmabant hanc fuisse summam vel culpae suae, vel erroris, quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire; carmenque Christo, quasi Deo, dicere secum invicem."‡ And Eusebius appears to be describing this *carmen*, or "the psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs," of which the Apostle Paul speaks. Eph. v. 19, when he says in the fourth century, ψαλμοὶ και ᾠδαὶ ἀδελφῶν ἀπαρχῆς ὑπο πιστῶν γραφεῖσθαι, τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ, τὸν Χριστὸν ὑμνοῦσι θεολογοῦντες.§

Although the Christians, in the earliest times, honoured the memory of martyrs, by meeting at the places where they had suffered, by celebrating the anniversary days of their martyrdom, and by recommending the imitation of their example, they distinguished most scrupulously the honours which they paid to mortals from the worship which is due to God. For their principle, as it is expressed at a later period by Origen, was this, "God only is to be worshipped: other beings may be τιμῆς ἀξία, οὐ μὲν και προσκυνήσεως και σεβασμῶν." And yet, notwithstanding this distinction, the two verbs προσκυνεῖν and σεβεσθαι are used by Justin Martyr in the second century to express the homage which belongs to the Son and the Spirit, as well as that which belongs to the Father. When the Christians were charged with atheism, because they did not worship idols, Justin Martyr answered, "We acknowledge that we are atheists in respect of those who are commonly called gods, but not in respect to the true God, the Father of

* Acts vii. 59, 60.

† Plin. Epist. Lib. X. 97.

‡ Rev. v. 13.

§ Eus. Hist. Ecc. Lib. V. cap. 25.

all; both him, and the Son who came from him, and the prophetic Spirit, *σεβομεθα και προσκυνουμεν, λογω και αληθειαι τιμωντες.*"*

The particulars which I have mentioned may suffice as a specimen of the sentiments and practice of the first three centuries. I do not propose to entangle myself in that controversy with regard to the meaning of particular passages, which Dr. Priestley's hasty and superficial History of Early Opinions concerning Jesus Christ has occasioned. It appears to me that this inaccuracy has been completely exposed by his able and learned antagonists, and that the more carefully any one examines the records which are preserved in the earliest Christian writers, he will be the more fully satisfied of the following points: that although a few individuals had begun, even then, to disseminate other opinions concerning the person of Christ, yet the great body of the Christian church considered him as entitled to receive the same worship with the Father, and were accustomed, in different parts of their public services of devotion, to ascribe this worship to him; that his title to this worship was in their minds connected with the divinity of his nature; and that the principle upon which their practice rested was the same which is expressed in the fourth century by Cyril, who, when the Christians were accused by the Emperor Julian of worshipping, like the Heathen, a dead man, thus answered: "We do not make a god of a man, but we worship him who is essentially God. and on that account, is fit to be worshipped."†

This being the principle upon which the Christian church from the earliest times had worshipped our Saviour, when the Arians, in the fourth century, avowedly taught that Jesus Christ is a creature, and yet joined with other Christians in worshipping him, Athanasius, and all those writers who held the received opinion concerning his Person, charged them with idolatry, the same in kind as that which was practised among the heathen. Their argument was this. Heathen idolatry did not consist in ascribing the same dignity and rank to all the multiplicity of gods who were worshipped; for the cosmogony of the philosophers, which always exhibited some theory of the gods as a branch of the system of nature, generally proceeded upon the supposition of there being *εἷς ἀγεννητος, και πολλοι γεννητοι*; and the popular traditional theology of the poets, and the vulgar exalted the Father of gods and men far above the other objects of worship. But heathen idolatry consisted in this, that the same kind of worship was paid to deities who were acknowledged to be inferior and produced, as to that Being who was called supreme; and that men, proceeding gradually in this prostitution of that which belongs exclusively to one unoriginate Intelligence, came to worship animals which had their birth upon earth, and even inanimate objects, which, however splendid or useful, are confessedly the workmanship of some mind. This is the very account of the idolatry of the heathen which the Apostle Paul gives. Rom. i. 25, when he says, *Εσεβασθησαν και ελατρευσαν τη κτισει πασα τον κτισαντα* not as in our translation, "worshipped and served the creature *more than* the Creator;" but, "by the side of the Creator, along with him." But these words, in which the apostle most accurately describes the practice of the heathen, may be literally applied to the Arians. For

* Apol. Prima. p. 11.

† Cyril. cont. Jul. Lib. VI. p. 203. Ed. Lips.

in their zeal to maintain the honour of God the Father, they had represented him as having, by an act of his will, produced out of nothing that glorious being who is called the Son, and after having thus separated the Son from the Father, as far as a creature is necessarily separated from the Creator, they worshipped this creature, *ελατρευσαν τη κτισει πασα τον κτισαντα*. It is true that the heathen worshipped many created beings in conjunction with one supreme, whereas the Arians worshipped only one: but this circumstance did not constitute any essential difference between them. The principle upon which the Arians worshipped Christ was so far from being repugnant to the worship of other created beings, that it naturally led to this extension of worship. For, as Athanasius reasons, if Christ is worshipped on account of the superior eminence of his glory, it follows that every inferior being ought to worship its superior; *αλλ' ουκ εστιν ουτως κτισματι γαρ κτισμα ου προσκυνει, αλλα κτισμα Θεου*.*

Such was the reasoning of Athanasius and the writers of his day, when they accused the Arians of idolatry, for worshipping a being whom they considered as a creature. The answer which was then made to the charge is not extant, for almost all the writings of the ancient Arians are lost. But if we may judge of their answer from the replies of their adversaries, it appears to have been the same with that which is found in the writings of those who in later times have held their opinions.

The modern Arians attempt to vindicate themselves from the charge of idolatry by making a distinction between the worship which they pay to God the Father, and that which they pay to the Son: the former they call supreme divine worship, the latter inferior religious worship. You will find amongst the tracts of Mr. Thomas Emlyn, a sincere and zealous assertor of Arian principles in the beginning of the eighteenth century, a treatise entitled, *A Vindication of the worship of the Lord Jesus Christ on Unitarian principles*. The plan of the treatise is to show, that supreme divine worship is, in Scripture, neither given nor required to be given to Jesus Christ; that the inferior religious worship of him, which the Scriptures allow and command, does not intrench upon the peculiar prerogative of God; and that as this mark of honour to the Saviour of the world, which the Scriptures expressly warrant, cannot be called will-worship, so it does not afford any sanction to Pagan or Popish idolatry. A distinction of the same kind is the subject of several of those propositions in which Dr. Clarke sets forth what he calls the Scripture doctrine of the Trinity; and this is his manner of stating it. "Supreme honour or worship is due to the person of the Father singly; and all prayers and praises ought primarily or ultimately to be directed to the person of the Father: the honour which the Scriptures direct to be paid to the Son is upon account of his actions and attributes relative to us, in accomplishing the dispensation of God towards mankind, and must always be understood as redounding ultimately to the glory of God the Father."

The Roman Catholics employ the same distinction between supreme and inferior worship in vindication of their worshipping angels, the

* Athan. Orat. II. 23.

virgin Mary, and departed saints. They have marked the distinction by *λατρεία*, and *δουλεία*, two words which were used promiscuously in ancient times, but which are carefully separated in the church of Rome; the first being employed to express that worship which belongs to the Supreme Being, the Creator and Preserver of all; the second, to express that inferior worship which it appears to them lawful and fit to yield to beings created by God. They admit, that the practice of the heathen deserves the severest condemnation, because it was *ειδωλολατρεία*, i. e. *idololatria*, giving the highest worship to idols; but they contend that no part of their practice deserves the name of idolatry, because it is only *δουλεία* which they pay to any of the creatures whom they worship.

It is of no importance in the present argument, to investigate at what period of the Christian church the distinction of these two words was invented. It is manifest that the distinction was unknown to the apostle Paul; for speaking of the heathen, he says in one place, *ελατρευσαν τη κτισει ταρα τον κτισαντα*;* in another, *εδουλευσατε τοις μη φυσει ουσι θεοις*.† Athanasius and the writers of his day appear to have followed the Scripture in the promiscuous use of the two words; and the whole train of reasoning which they employ against the Arians shows that they were ignorant of that distinction betwixt supreme and inferior worship, which the two words have been employed to mark. The fallacy of the distinction has been fully exposed by the learned Bishop Stillingfleet, in several places of his works, and particularly in his Discourse concerning the nature of Idolatry. It is touched upon occasionally by Dr. Cudworth, in his valuable work, entitled *The Intellectual System of the Universe*: and it is stated at great length and with much perspicuity, by Dr. Waterland, in his reply to Dr. Clarke, and by the other writers whom the revival of the Arian controversy in the last century has called forth in defence of the ancient faith of the church.

The arguments, opposed by the Athanasian writers to the answers by which the Arians endeavour to exculpate themselves from the charge of idolatry, may thus be stated in few words. There is no intimation in Scripture of any distinction between supreme or ultimate, and inferior or relative worship. On the other hand, worship, which is the expression of that veneration and submission of soul that is due to God, is represented in Scripture as consisting of certain outward acts, such as adoration, prayer, offering sacrifice, burning incense, and making vows; all which acts are clearly discriminated from expressions of the respect due to creatures. Instead of allowing these acts of worship to be performed to creatures upon this provision that they ultimately tend to his glory, the Almighty hath chosen to guard the honour of his great name by claiming them as exclusively his own; and we are not left to distinguish an act of worship performed to a creature, from the same act performed to the Creator, by the difference of intention, the different degrees of esteem which accompany the act: but we are required to follow the precise rule laid down in Scripture, according to which the worship of a creature never can agree with the worship of the Creator, but is directly opposite to it, being an in-

* Rom. i. 25.

† Gal. iv. 8.

vasion of the prerogative of the Supreme Being. The character which Paul gives of the heathen, is, *εδουλευσάτε τοις μη φύσει οντι θεοις*; and Christians, says one Father, return to heathenism, *τη πτίζει συναραπλεχοντες τον φύσει Θεον*. “Either, therefore,” says another, “let the Arians cease to worship him whom they call a creature, or cease to call him a creature whom they worship, lest, under the name of worship, they be found to commit sacrilege.”

Such is the state of the argument upon both sides, in the Arian controversy with regard to the worship of Christ. I have now to direct your attention to the form which this subject has assumed in the Socinian controversy.

When Socinus, about the end of the sixteenth century, revived that opinion which had been broached by a few individuals in the first century, that Christ was a mere man, he did not so far depart from the practice of the Christian church as to deny that Christ ought to be worshipped. But having represented the title of Christ to worship, as founded upon that universal dominion with which he was invested after the resurrection, Socinus endeavoured to show, that there is no instance in Scripture of our Saviour’s being worshipped prior to his resurrection, and that all the instances of worship paid to him posterior to that period have a reference to the glory and power to which he was then exalted in consequence of the actions which he had done upon earth; and he maintained that, independently of any positive precept, the kingdom which our Lord received, and the authority which he continues to exercise in relation to us, create an obligation upon Christians to worship him. Several of those, who held the same opinion with Socinus concerning the person of Christ, did not agree with him in this speculation. They contended that if Christ be merely a man he never can be entitled to any other kind of honour than that which is due to human excellence, and that no degree of exaltation is a sufficient warrant to his disciples for ascribing to him that worship which belongs to God. Socinus did not perceive or did not choose to admit that this was a consequence which flowed from his principles. There is extant in his works a dispute between him and Franciscus Davides upon this subject. The dispute ended, like most others, without changing the opinion of either of the parties: Socinus continued to inveigh against those who refused to worship Christ; and he gave his consent that Franciscus Davides should be suspended from his public ministry, merely for his teaching that Christ ought not to be worshipped.

But there is so manifest a repugnancy between the worship of Christ and the pure principles of Socinianism, that it was impossible for any authority to preserve this branch of the practice of Socinus amongst those who received and followed out his system. Accordingly, Dr. Priestley, Mr. Lindsey, and all the Socinians of the last century, who call themselves Unitarians, have openly disclaimed the worship of Christ. While they profess the highest veneration for the name of Socinus, they consider his zeal for defending the worship of Christ, as either an accommodation to established opinion, which he judged prudent at the first introduction of his system, or as a degree of prejudice and weakness of which even his mind was unable to divest itself: and they remove what they call an imperfection which

adhered to the first sketch of the Socinian doctrine, by avowing as their principle, that religious worship is to be offered to one God the Father only, as his incommunicable honour and prerogative. Their chief objections to the liturgy of the church of England amount to this, that it contains prayers addressed to Jesus Christ; and their practice in their meetings is to avoid every form of words which seems to imply that he is an object of worship.

The arguments by which the modern Unitarians vindicate this practice, appear to derive considerable advantage from the different acceptations of *προσκυνεω*, the word which, both in the Septuagint and in the New Testament, is translated worship. It sometimes marks adoration, and sometimes nothing more than that prostration of the body which was common in eastern countries upon the appearance of a superior. It is used in this last sense by Herodotus,* and even in the Old Testament. Thus, 1 Chron. xxix. 20, we read, “that all the congregation bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord and the king, *i. e.* they bowed their bodies in testimony of reverence both for the God and the king of Israel. Nay, in one of our Lord’s parables, Matt. xviii. 26, it is said, that the servant falling down before his Master, “*προστεκυνει αυτον*.” But the advantage which the Unitarians derive from this ambiguous use of the Greek word is more apparent than real. For besides that circumstances will almost always clearly indicate whether the action marked by *προσκυνεω* expresses, in that case, religious homage, or merely the highest degree of civil respect, we derive our warrant for worshipping Christ not simply from the application of that word, but from a variety of acts which, although they are by no means implied in the literal sense of *προσκυνεω*, go to make up the general notion of worship, and in which there is nothing equivocal. We say that there are in Scripture many instances of praise, thanksgiving, and prayer, being addressed to Jesus, all of which imply a conviction in the worshippers that his knowledge and power are not limited, and that he is every where present: and from these instances, taken in conjunction with the command to honour him even as we honour the Father,† and with the revelation of the glory of his character, and his relation to us, we infer that it is not only lawful, but proper for Christians to worship him.

The Unitarians endeavour to invalidate this conclusion by a laboured attempt to explain the Scriptures in a consistency with their own system. They say, that the thanksgivings which we quote are mere effusions of gratitude; that the prayers are only wishes; that the invocation of Stephen in the book of Acts, and the doxologies in the book of the Revelation were addressed to Jesus when he was present, and do not warrant us to pray to him or praise him when he is absent. It is impossible to enter into the detail of their criticisms. But if you take the instances of worship being paid to Jesus, which Dr. Clarke has very fairly collected in his Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, and read at the same time the commentaries upon these texts, which Mr. Lindsey has inserted in the sequel to his Apology, and in a separate dissertation upon this subject, you will have an excellent specimen of that kind of Scripture criticism which the Socinians are

* Herod. Polym. 136.

† John v. 23.

often obliged to employ in defence of different parts of their system, and which, in giving a sense of Scripture far from being obvious, requires such an expense of ingenuity as has always appeared to me to be of itself a sufficient proof that their opinions are not founded in Scripture.

The controversy between the Athanasians, the Arians, and the Socinians, upon the points of which we have been speaking, may be thus shortly stated. The Athanasian syllogism is, none but God ought to be worshipped: Jesus Christ is worshipped in Scripture; therefore he is God. The Arian syllogism is, supreme worship is due to God, but inferior worship may be paid to a creature: It is only inferior worship that is paid to Jesus Christ in Scripture; therefore, although he be worshipped, he is a creature. The Socinian syllogism is, none but God ought to be worshipped: Christ is not God; therefore all the passages of Scripture, which seem to ascribe worship to him, are to be explained in such a sense as to be consistent with this conclusion. The Socinians adopt the major proposition of the Athanasian syllogism, that Christ is not to be worshipped. The Arians deny it.

The manner in which the Arians attempt to evade the force of the major proposition is by a distinction which, we say, has no foundation in Scripture. The manner in which the Socinians attempt to evade the force of the minor proposition is by a kind of criticism which, we say, does violence to Scripture. If it shall appear to you, upon examining the subject, that we are right in saying so, you will be struck with the simplicity and consistency of the Athanasian system. According to that system, the Scriptures having ascribed to Jesus the names, the attributes, and the actions of God, and having expressly declared that he is God, give us a practical proof that those whom the Spirit guided into all truth, considered him as God, by their paying him that worship which the Scriptures declare to be the incommunicable prerogative of the Supreme Being. Here is a chain of argument in which nothing appears to be wanting. All the parts of it hang together, and support one another. It produced a conviction of the divinity of our Saviour in the minds of those to whom it was first proposed; and the authority of example, the respect which it is natural for us to pay to the opinions of those who were placed in a most favourable situation for judging, is thus superinduced to warrant that conclusion which the declarations of Scripture appear to us to establish, that Jesus Christ is truly and essentially God.

CHAPTER VIII.

UNION OF NATURES IN CHRIST.

It is one part of the third opinion concerning the person of Christ, that he is truly God. But the whole history of his life exhibits him as a man; and the constant language of Scripture upon this head, which has led the Socinians to consider him as merely a man, is the ground of the other part of the third opinion concerning his person, that he is not only truly God, but also truly man.

The proofs of the human nature of Christ found in the Scriptures, are obvious to the plainest understanding; and whatever difficulties may occur to those who attempt to speculate upon the subject, the opinion itself has been generally held in the Christian church. Although Jesus upon some occasions assumes this exalted title, "the Son of God," he generally calls himself by a name most significant of his humanity, "the Son of man." We found by an analysis of the beginning of John's gospel, that "the Word," who "in the beginning was with God, and was God," is called Jesus Christ; and we read elsewhere of Jesus Christ, that he was "wearied with his journey,"* that "he was hungry,"† that "he ate and drank,"‡ that his soul was "exceeding sorrowful even unto death,"§ that "he gave up the ghost, that he was buried, and that he rose from the grave."||

These propositions, so opposite to one another, imply a corresponding difference of nature in the person concerning whom all of them are affirmed. There is an illusion throughout the New Testament, if he who made the worlds, and he who "was an hungered," is not the same person; and yet we have seen that he who made the worlds was God, and we cannot doubt that he who was an hungered was man. The inference thus clearly drawn, from laying different passages together, is confirmed by an examination of those places which present in one view the divine and the human nature of the man Christ Jesus. Of this kind are the three following.

John i. 14. *Και ὁ λόγος σαῶς ἐγένετο.* The Socinians, in conformity to their interpretation of the first part of the chapter, understand this phrase to mean nothing more than that the reason or wisdom of God resided in the man Jesus Christ, and might thus figuratively be said to have become flesh. But all those, both Athanasians and Arians, who consider *λόγος* in the first verse as denoting a person, must understand what is here said of him as meaning, "this person became

* John iv. 6.

† Mark xi. 12.

‡ Mark ii. 14.

§ Matth. xxvi. 38.

|| John xix. xx.

flesh, or was incarnate." And all that is said of the *λογος* in the former verse may be applied to the person who, at a certain time became flesh.

Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8. The apostle is recommending to Christians humility, from the example of Jesus Christ, "Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus." In order to explain what mind was in Christ, or what degree of humility he exhibited, the apostle describes two different states of Christ, one which he resigned, and another to which he submitted; and his humility consisted in descending from the one to the other. The first state is expressed by this phrase, *ὡς ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ ἵστασθων*. The Socinians, who do not admit that Jesus Christ ever was in any state more dignified than that of a man, have no other mode of explaining this phrase, but by applying it to those extraordinary displays of divine wisdom and power which Jesus exhibited upon earth, and by which he who was merely a man, appeared to the eyes of the beholders to be a God. But this interpretation, besides that it is by no means adequate to the import of the phrase, inverts the order, and impairs the force of the whole passage. It represents the *μορφῇ Θεοῦ* as posterior to the *κενωσις*, and the humility of Christ as consisting purely in this, that he did not employ his extraordinary powers in preserving his life. Whereas the *μορφῇ Θεοῦ* appears intended by the apostle to represent a state prior to the *κενωσις*, by which means the whole of Christ's appearance upon earth becomes an example of humility.

The Arians, who admit that Jesus Christ often appeared under the Old Testament, in the person, and by the name of Jehovah, employ these appearances to explain this phrase, "Who, being before his incarnation in the form of God, appeared during his life in the form of a man." The Athanasians, who believe that Jesus is essentially God, understand by *μορφῇ Θεοῦ*, not a character which he occasionally personated, but those glories of the divine nature which from eternity belonged to him, which, in reference to the phrase used in the 4th verse, may be called *τὰ ἑαυτοῦ*, and which correspond to the concluding clause of the 6th verse, *το εἶναι ἴσα Θεῷ*. Whether the Arian or Athanasian interpretation of *μορφῇ Θεοῦ* be adopted, Jesus Christ did display great humility in becoming a man. But the Arians find it difficult to reconcile their system with the second clause of the 6th verse. They cannot adopt our translation, "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," because that clearly implies that he was once equal with God, and that he considered this equality as his right, which he was not under any obligation to resign. They translate the clause, therefore, thus, "He did not look upon the being honoured equally with God, as a prize to be snatched, eagerly laid hold of. He did not covet it." Dr. Clarke has defended this translation with the ability of a scholar; and, in my opinion, as far as *ἀεπαλαμὸν ἔγγιστα* is concerned, with success. For whether we consider these two words in themselves, or compare the few places of other authors where they occur, it appears more natural to render them, "thought a prey of which he was eager or tenacious," than "thought it a robbery." But if you read the perspicuous able commentary which Bishop Sherlock has given in the first three parts of his discourse on this text, at the beginning of the fourth volume of his discourses, you will perceive

that, although the Arians are delivered from that direct contradiction to their system which the translation in our Bible bears, yet even their own translation does not give any essential support to their system. For *το ειναι ισα Θεω* refers to the same thing with *μοεφη Θεου*, and, being set in opposition to the appearance of a creature which Christ assumed, implies an essential equality with God. But if he had no right to this equality, it is a strange instance of humility in Christ, that he had not the presumption to lay hold of it. Whereas if he had a right, his not eagerly retaining it, but laying aside the appearance of it, was the greatest humility. So that the apostle's argument turns upon the right of Christ to be like God; and the only difference created by the two translations is this—according to our translation, the last clause of the 6th verse is a continuation of the description of the prior state of Christ: according to Dr. Clarke's, it is the beginning of the description of his humiliation. You will perceive the course of the apostle's argument in the following paraphrase: “Jesus Christ, who, before he appeared upon earth, was in the form of God, *i. e.* possessed all the glories of the divine nature, was not tenacious of this equality with God, did not consider it as a thing to be eagerly grasped, but emptied himself. He could not cease to be God, but he divested himself of those glories which constitute the form of God, having taken the form of a servant. Had he appeared as an angel, this would have been taking, in respect of God, the form of a servant; and therefore it is added as the specific description of that form of a servant which he took, having become in the likeness of men; and although he retained the nature of God, yet, as to outward appearance or fashion, being found by those who sought to take away his life, such as man is, he humbled himself so far, that, when he had power to retain his life, he surrendered it, and submitted to an ignominious death.”

By this natural interpretation, the succession of propositions contained in this passage teaches us that the same person who was God became man; and since he who was once God must be always God, the nature of God being unchangeable, it follows that he was at the same time both God and man.

The same thing is intimated less clearly, but with a little attention it will appear, not less exclusively, in the third passage, Heb. ii. 14. 16. The apostle is giving a reason why the Captain of Salvation took part of flesh and blood. The reason is, that he might have it in his power to die, because his death was to be the instrument of our deliverance from death. But as nobody thinks of giving a reason why a man should be a man, the apostle's giving a reason why Christ took part of flesh and blood, implies that this was not the necessary condition of his being, but that it was a matter of choice; and therefore it follows not only that he existed before he made the choice, but that he had it in his power to make a different choice, *i. e.* that he existed in a state which admitted of his choosing a more splendid appearance, had he so inclined. That this state was superior to the condition of angels, is made plain by the 16th verse, the most literal and proper rendering of which is, “For truly he lays not hold of angels, but he lays hold of the seed of Abraham,” *ὅθεν* upon account of his making which choice, it was necessary that he should in all

things be made like his brethren. Now whether "laying hold of angels" implies, as the Socinians are fond of interpreting the phrase, "helping angels," because they do not suppose that Christ had it in his power to be like an angel; or whether it means, according to our translation, laying hold of them, so as to assume their nature and form, the phrase is very improper, unless the Being to whom it is applied was so far superior to angels, that he had it in his power to pass by them or not, to lay hold of them or not, as he pleased. And this Being, who, in his antecedent state of existence was superior to angels, it is here said, took part of flesh and blood, which are the characteristics of men; and because he was thus made in all things like them, they are called his brethren.

The review of these three passages suggests the whole of the argument upon this subject, which may be thus stated in a few words. The names, the characters, the actions, and the honours of God are ascribed to Jesus Christ: the affections, the infirmities, and the sufferings of man are also ascribed to Jesus Christ; therefore in him the divine and human natures were united, or the same Person is both God and man.

It would seem that this inference should be admitted by all those who pay a due regard to the plain declarations of Scripture; and, had Christians rested in this inference, there could not have been much variety of opinion upon the subject. But when men began to speculate concerning the manner of that union which the Scriptures teach us to believe, they soon went far beyond the measure of information which the Scriptures afford. They multiplied words without having clear ideas; their meaning being, in this way, never perfectly apprehended by themselves was readily misunderstood by others; and the controversies upon this point, which, at the beginning, involved a fundamental article of the Christian faith, degenerated at last into a verbal dispute, conducted with much acrimony, in the mere jargon of metaphysics.

Those sects who considered Jesus as merely a man, whatever was the date of their existence, or whatever were the numbers that embraced their tenets, escaped by the simplicity of their system from this controversy. But the great body of Christians, who learned from Scripture that Jesus Christ was more than man, differed widely in their speculations as to the manner of reconciling the opposite descriptions of his Person; and, in the early ages of Christianity, the dispute was of much importance, because it turned upon the reality of the two natures, or the permanency of their union.

In the history of this controversy our attention is first engaged by the opinion of the Gnostics. All the Gnostics agreed in considering the Christ as an emanation from the Supreme Mind, an *Æon* of the highest order sent from the Pleroma, *i. e.* the space inhabited by those spirits who had emanated from the Supreme Mind, to deliver the human race. But as the fundamental principle of their system was the inherent and incorrigible depravity of matter, all of them agreed also in thinking it impossible that so exalted a spirit was truly and permanently united to a gross material substance. Some of them, therefore, supposed that Jesus, although made in the likeness of men, was not really a man; that the body which the Jews saw was either a

phantasm that played upon their senses, or, if it had a real existence, was a spiritual substance, not formed of the same corruptible materials as our bodies, standing in no need of those supplies which it seemed to receive, and incapable of those sufferings which it seemed to endure. Those Gnostics, who considered Jesus as a man only in appearance, are known by the name *δοκηταί*. Other Gnostics, who found it difficult to reconcile the mere phantasm of a body with the history of Jesus Christ, followed the more substantial system of Cerinthus, who held that Jesus of Nazareth was a man born like other men, and not distinguished from his countrymen, till he was thirty years of age, in any other way than by the innocence of his life: that when he came to John to be baptized, that exalted Æon called the Christ, descended upon him in the form of a dove, or in the manner in which a dove descends, and continued to inhabit his body during the period of his ministry; that the person called Jesus Christ was a man, all whose actions were directed by the Æon who dwelt within him, but that when he was delivered into the hands of the Jews, the Christ returned to the Pleroma, and Jesus was left to suffer and to die.

It is a tradition derived from the earliest Christian writers, that the Apostle John lived to witness both these branches of the Gnostic heresy, and that he wrote his gospel and his epistles on purpose to correct their errors; and this tradition is very much confirmed by our observing that by means of the continual reference which his writings bear to the tenets that were then spreading among Christians, we are able to derive from them the clearest proofs both of the divinity and of the humanity of our Saviour. Thus, in his gospel, as he begins with declaring “the word was God,” so he says at the 14th verse. “the word was made flesh:” and in his 1st Epistle, v. 20, as he says of Jesus Christ, “This is the true God,” so he bears his testimony both against the Cerinthians, who separated Jesus from Christ, (ii. 22.) and against the Docetæ, who said that Jesus Christ was not truly a man. (iv. 2, 3.) The phrase used in the last of these passages, “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,” furnishes an argument which Dr. Horsley has urged with his wonted acuteness against the modern Unitarians. The argument is this: Unless the words “in the flesh” are mere expletives, they limit the words “is come” to some particular manner of coming. This limitation either is nugatory, or it presumes a possibility of other ways of coming. But it was not possible for a mere man to come otherwise than in the flesh; therefore Jesus Christ is more than man. And thus in this proposition, “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,” the denial of which John makes a mark of Antichrist, there is an allusion both to the divinity and to the incarnation of our Saviour.

While the general principles of the Gnostics led them to deny the reality of Christ’s body, it is the character of that system which is known by the name of the Apollinarian, to ascribe to our Saviour a true body, but not a human soul. We have reason to believe that the ancient Arians, who held Christ to be the most exalted spirit that had proceeded from God, considered this spirit as performing the functions of a human soul in the body which it assumed, so that, as in all mere men, there is the union of a body with a human soul, there was in the person of Jesus Christ the union of a body with an angelical

spirit. Apollinaris did not hold the distinguishing tenet of Arius. He was the friend of Athanasius, himself an able and zealous assertor of the divinity of Christ. But he conceived that the most natural way of explaining the incarnation of the Son of God was to consider the Godhead as supplying the place of a soul, and the body which the Godhead animated, as in all respects like the bodies of other men; and as this system appeared to degrade the Godhead, by subjecting it to all the sensations of a human soul, Apollinaris endeavoured to obviate the objection arising from this degradation, by recurring to a distinction well known in the ancient Greek philosophy; a distinction between *ψυχή*, the sensitive soul which man has in common with the other animals, and *νοῦς*, the rational soul by which he is raised above them. Apollinaris held that Christ assumed, together with the body, the *ψυχή*, or principle of animal life; but that he did not assume the *νοῦς*, the principle of thought and reason, because all the offices which belong to this higher power were in him performed by the Godhead.

The modern Arians, who, in the last century, have revived the ancient tenet, that Christ the Word is an exalted angel, incline to adopt the Apollinarian system. It appears to them superfluous to place the spirit of an angel and the spirit of a man in the same body; and they say, that the easiest explication of this phrase, “the Word was made flesh,” that which preserves the most proper unity of person, and renders Jesus Christ, strictly speaking, one intelligent agent, is this, that the spirit of the angel, who is called the Word, inhabited and animated a human body. The modern Arians defend this Apollinarian system by the following arguments. As the body is the only part of human nature which we perceive, and as we are entirely ignorant of the manner of the union between body and mind, the name man is properly applied to every being which possesses a human body, performing its functions under the guidance of a spirit, whatever the origin or rank of that spirit be: and accordingly those inhabitants of heaven who appeared frequently under the Old Testament, and the angels who appeared at the resurrection of Jesus, are called men, because they had the appearance of men, although it was never supposed that they had a human soul. The Scriptures speak of Christ’s coming in the flesh, of his being made flesh, of his taking part of flesh and blood: they never speak of his taking a soul; and all the phrases in which the soul and spirit of Christ are mentioned, do not denote different parts of the same person, but are Hebrew idioms which mean nothing more than Christ himself.

The answers to these arguments of the modern Arians which readily occur are the following: that Jesus Christ was not truly a man, unless he assumed that kind of spirit which is characteristical of the human species; that man is what he is, by his mind more than by his body; and that if our Lord stooped to the external form, it is not likely that he would disdain to connect himself with the spiritual inhabitant; that there is no analogy between the transient appearances of angels recorded in Scripture, and the permanent complete humanity manifested in the words, the actions, and the sufferings of him who “dwelt among” men; and that the expressions of Scripture referring to the soul of Christ are so many, and repeated in such a variety of forms, that a great part of the history of Jesus is enigmatical and illu-

sory, unless he was truly a man in respect of his soul as well as in respect of his body.

Such are the arguments which our habits and modes of thinking suggest, and which the Athanasians and Socinians of our days conspire in opposing to the Apollinarian system. But there is another argument which was considered in ancient times as a more effectual refutation of the Apollinarian system than any that I have mentioned. It was universally believed in the first ages of the Christian church, that there is a place for departed spirits, where the souls of the righteous rest in joy and hope, although they are not put in possession of the complete happiness of heaven, until they are re-united to their bodies at the last day. This place was called *Hades*, hell, a word which, in ecclesiastical writers, denoted originally not a state of punishment, but merely the habitation of departed spirits, as the grave is the receptacle of the body. Of this place David was supposed to speak in Psalm xvi. "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption;" and, as the Apostle Peter expressly applies these words to Jesus, Acts ii. 31, when he says, "David, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption," it was believed on this authority, that when the body of Christ was committed to the grave, his soul went to the place of departed spirits, and remained there till his resurrection. But if the soul of Christ went to the place of departed spirits, it follows that he had a complete human soul, and was in this respect, as well as in respect of his body, made like his brethren. For the ψυχή, the sensitive soul of animals, does not enter that place: the Godhead cannot be supposed to have been confined there; and therefore it could be nothing but the νοῦς, the reasoning soul, which the Apollinarian system denied to Christ, that waited, in the same place with other souls, the resurrection of his body.

When the council of Constantinople, in the end of the fourth century, the second of those which are called general councils, condemned the opinion of Apollinaris, they declared that they considered Christ as being οὔτε ἀψύχον, οὔτε ἀνοον, and that they did not hold ἀτελή την της σαρκος οἰκονομίαν, i. e. that they believed him to be truly and completely a man. The church did not long rest in this acknowledgment of that truth which the Scriptures seem to teach upon this subject, but soon began to speculate concerning the manner in which this complete human nature is united with the Godhead, and from their speculations upon this incomprehensible point there arose different sects, whose peculiar tenets are still retained in some parts of the Christian church. It is the business of ecclesiastical history to trace the origin and the progress of these sects. I shall content myself with marking their distinguishing opinions, and, instead of attempting to follow them through the labyrinth of metaphysics, in which they contended with one another, I shall barely suggest the general views upon which the different opinions proceeded.

Nestorius, who had been taught to distinguish accurately between the divine and human nature of Christ, was offended with some expressions commonly used by Christians in the beginning of the fifth century, which seemed to destroy that distinction, and particularly

with their calling the virgin Mary *θεοτοκος*, as if it were possible for the Godhead to be born. His zeal provoked opposition; in the eagerness of controversy he was led to use unguarded expressions; and he was condemned by the third of the general councils, the council of Ephesus, in the year 431. It is a matter of doubt whether the opinions of Nestorius, if he had been allowed by his adversaries fairly to explain them, would have appeared inconsistent with the doctrine established by the council of Ephesus, that Christ is one person, in whom two natures were most closely united. But whatever was the extent of the error of Nestorius, from him is derived that system concerning the incarnation of Christ, which is held by a large body of Christians in Chaldea, Assyria, and other regions of the east, and which is known in the ecclesiastical history of the west by the name of the Nestorian heresy. The object of the Nestorians is to avoid every appearance of ascribing to the divinity of Christ the weakness of humanity; and therefore they distinguish between Christ, and God who dwelt in Christ as in a temple. They say, that from the moment of the virgin's conception, there commenced an intimate and indissoluble union between Christ and God, that these two persons presented in Jesus Christ one *πρόσωπον*, or aspect, but that the union between them is merely an union of will and affection, such in kind as that which subsists between two friends, although much closer in degree.

Opposite to the Nestorian opinion is the Eutychian, which derives its name from Eutyches, an abbot of Constantinople, who, about the middle of the fifth century, in his zeal to avoid the errors of Nestorius, was carried to the other extreme. Those who did not hold the Nestorian opinions had been accustomed to speak of the "one incarnate nature" of Christ. But Eutyches used this phrase in such a manner as to appear to teach that the human nature of Christ was absorbed in the divine, and that his body had no real existence. This opinion was condemned in the year 451, by the council of Chalcedon, the fourth general council, which declared, as the faith of the catholic church, that Christ is one person; that in this unity of person there are two natures, the divine and the human; and that there is no change, or mixture, or confusion of these two natures, but that each retains its distinguishing properties. The decree of Chalcedon was not universally submitted to. But many of the successors of Eutyches, wishing to avoid the palpable absurdity which was ascribed to him, of supposing that one nature was absorbed by another, and anxious at the same time to preserve that unity which the Nestorians divided, declared their faith to be, that in Christ there is one nature, but that this nature is twofold or compounded.

From this tenet, the meaning of which I do not pretend to explain, the successors of Eutyches derive the name of Monophysites; and from Jacob Baradaeus, who in the following century was a zealous and successful preacher of the system of the Monophysites, they are more commonly known by the name of Jacobites. The Monophysites or Jacobites are found chiefly near the Euphrates and Tigris; they are much less numerous than the Nestorians; and although they profess to have corrected the errors which were supposed to adhere

to the Eutychian heresy, they may be considered as having formed their peculiar opinions upon the general principles of that system.

The Monothelites, an ancient sect, of whom a remnant is found in the neighbourhood of Mount Libanus, disclaim any connexion with Eutyches, and agree with the Catholics in ascribing two natures to Christ; but they have received their name from their conceiving that Christ, being one Person, can have only one will: whereas the Catholics, considering both natures as complete, think it essential to each to have a will, and say that every inconvenience which can be supposed to arise from two wills in one person, is removed by the perfect harmony between that will which belongs to the divine, and that which belongs to the human nature of Christ.

Only one circumstance remains to be stated, in order to complete the view of the doctrine of the church, concerning the incarnation of the Son of God. It is what is called the miraculous conception of our Saviour; by which is meant that the human nature of Christ was formed, not in the ordinary method of generation, but out of the substance of the Virgin Mary, by the immediate operation of the Holy Ghost.

The evidence upon which this article of the Christian faith rests, is found in Matt. i. 18—23, and in the more particular narration which Luke has given in the first chapter of his gospel. If we admit this evidence of the fact, we can discern the emphatical meaning of the appellation given to the Saviour, when he is called the seed of the woman, Gen. iii. 15; we can perceive the meaning of a phrase which Luke has introduced into the genealogy of Jesus, Luke iii. 23, and of which otherwise it is not possible to give a good account; *ὡν, ὡς ἐνομιζέτο, υἱὸς Ἰωσήφ*; and we can discover a peculiar significancy in an expression of the Apostle Paul, Gal. iv. 4, “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman.”

Some sects of early Christians, whose principles did not allow them to admit the miraculous conception, got rid of this article of the Christian faith by rejecting the first two chapters of Matthew's gospel, the only gospel which they received; and Dr. Priestley has spent half a volume in attempting to show that this doctrine may be false, although it is delivered by two Evangelists. Upon those who believe the authenticity and inspiration of Scripture, his argument will make no impression, and as these are the two fundamental principles upon which my course proceeds, I will not, at this stage of our progress, spend any time in combating the reasons which Dr. Priestley presumes to oppose to the authority of Scripture. The miraculous conception, the last article, as Mr. Gibbon says, which Dr. Priestley has struck out of his scanty creed, has been the uniform faith of the Christian church: it is the foundation of several questions concerning Mary, more curious than useful, which have been eagerly discussed; and it is implied in those honours which, from the beginning, have been paid to her, and which, in the church of Rome, have degenerated into idolatry. The conception of Jesus is the point from which we date the union between his divine and human nature; and, this conception being miraculous, the existence of the Person in whom they are united was not physically derived from Adam. But, as Dr. Horsley speaks in his sermon on the incarnation, union

with the uncreated Word is the very principle of personality and individual existence in the Son of Mary. According to this view of the matter, the miraculous conception gives a completeness and consistency to the revelation concerning Jesus Christ. Not only is he the Son of God, but, as the Son of man, he is exalted above his brethren, while he is made like them. He is preserved from the contamination adhering to the race whose nature he assumed; and when the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, was made flesh, the intercourse which, as man, he had with God is distinguished, not in degree only, but in kind, from that which any prophet ever enjoyed, and is infinitely more intimate, because it did not consist in communications occasionally made to him, but arose from the manner in which his human nature had its existence.

After the fact is admitted, that the divine and human natures were united in Jesus Christ, all speculations concerning the manner of the fact are vague and unsatisfying; all disputes upon this point instantly degenerate into a mere verbal controversy, in which the terms of human science are applied to a subject which is infinitely exalted above them, and words are multiplied very far beyond the number and clearness of the ideas entertained by those who use them. There are no disputes, even in scholastic theology, which are more frivolous, and none which, in the present state of science, appear more uninteresting, than those that respect the doctrine of the incarnation; and there is a danger that you may from thence conceive a prejudice against the importance of the doctrine itself. I mean, therefore, to lay aside all consideration of the different opinions, and to take hold of that simple proposition which the Scriptures declare, that I may show you the rank which it holds in the scheme of Christianity—the consequences which flow from it—and the influence which it sheds over other articles of our faith.

We have learned from Scripture that Jesus Christ is truly God: we have learned from Scripture that he is truly man; and therefore it is unquestionably the doctrine of Scripture that he is both God and man. This union of the nature of God and the nature of man in his person, is called by divines the Hypostatical or Personal Union, of which it is impossible for us to form an adequate conception, and upon which the mind soon wanders when it begins to speculate; but which, with those who rest in the declarations of Scripture, is understood to mean, that the same person is both God and man.

Since Jesus Christ is both God and man, it follows that each nature in him is complete, and that the two are distinct from one another. If the divine nature were incomplete, he would not be God; if the human nature were incomplete, he would not be man; and if the two natures were confounded, he would neither be truly God, nor truly man, but something arising out of the composition. In this respect the union of the soul and body of a man is a very inadequate representation of the hypostatical union. Neither the soul nor the body is by itself complete. The soul without the body has no instrument of its operations: the body without the soul is destitute of the principle of life; the two are only different parts of one complex nature. But Jesus Christ was God before he became

man, and there was nothing deficient in his humanity ; so that the hypostatical union was the union of two distinct natures, each of which is entire.

The hypostatical union, thus understood, is the key which opens to us a great part of the phraseology of Scripture concerning Jesus Christ. He is sometimes spoken of as God ; He is sometimes spoken of as man ; and things peculiar to each nature are affirmed concerning him, not as if he possessed one nature to the exclusion of the other, but because, possessing both, the characters of each may with equal propriety be ascribed to him. This is known in the Greek theological writers by the name of *ἀντιδοσις ἰδιωμάτων*, which the Latins have translated *communicatio proprietatum*, the communication of the properties. You will not understand them to mean by this phrase, that any thing peculiar to the divine nature was communicated to the human, or *vice versa* ; for it is impossible that the Deity can share in the weakness of humanity, and it is impossible that humanity could be exalted to a participation of any of the essential perfections of the God-head. Although, therefore, the Word fills heaven and earth, because by him all things consist, yet as it is of the very nature of body to occupy a certain portion of space, the body of Christ, without losing that nature from which it derives its name, cannot, by union with the Word, become omnipresent, but during our Lord's ministry was upon earth, forty days after his resurrection ascended, *i. e.* was transferred by a local motion from earth to heaven, and is now in heaven. I have chosen this example, because the Lutheran church, in attempting to explain the words used by our Lord in the institution of the Lord's supper, "This is my body," have conceived that ubiquity is derived to the body of Christ from its connexion with the *λογος*.

This error our church justly condemns. Each nature we conceive to retain its own properties, and there is said to be a communication of properties for this reason, because the properties of both natures are ascribed to the same person, in so much, that even when Jesus Christ derives his name from his divine nature, as when he is called the Son of God, things peculiar to the human nature are affirmed of him. "Christ, in the work of mediation, acteth according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself. Yet, by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature."*

Thus, when we read of the "church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood"—"that God laid down his life for us"—"that the Lord of glory was crucified,"—we do not, from such expressions, infer that God could suffer : but, taking the passages from which we had inferred the union of two natures in Christ as a guide, we consider these expressions as only transferring, in consequence of the closeness of that union, to him who is called God, because he is God, the actions and passions which belong to him because he is man. In like manner, when we read that all things were made by the Word, we do not suppose that they were made by the Word after

* Confession of Faith, viii. 7.

he became flesh; and when our Lord says, "the Son of man hath power to forgive sins," we recollect that the Person who claims this high and incommunicable prerogative of the Deity is the Word who "in the beginning was with God, and was God;" and the truth of the proposition does not appear to us to be in the least impaired by his condescending to remind us, at the very time when he claims this prerogative, that he is also the Son of man.

This mode of speaking, so frequent in Scripture, by which the properties of both God and man are applied to Jesus Christ, the properties of God even when he is called man, and the properties of man even when he is called God, has given occasion to one distinction which is used by the ancient theological writers, and to another which is used by the modern. Neither distinction is expressed in the words of Scripture: but both are warranted by the authority of Scripture; and both are employed for the same purpose, to explain several passages concerning Jesus Christ, which, without attending to such distinctions, appear to contradict the analogy of faith. The ancient distinction is thus explained by Bishop Bull,* whose words I shall nearly translate. "The whole doctrine concerning Christ was divided by the ancient doctors of the church into two parts, which they called *θεολογια* and *οικονομια*. By *θεολογια* they meant every thing that related to the divinity of our Saviour; his being the Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, and the world's being made by him. By *οικονομια* they meant his incarnation, and every thing that he did in the flesh to procure the salvation of mankind. Our God Jesus Christ, says Ignatius, was born by Mary *κατ' οικονομιαν Θεου*. Christians, says Justin, acknowledge Christ the Son of God, who was before the morning star, and condescended to be made flesh *ἵνα δια τῆς οικονομίας ταύτης* the serpent might be destroyed. We believe, says Irenæus, in the Son of God, Jesus Christ our Lord, by whom are all things, *καὶ εἰς τὰς οικονομίας αὐτοῦ*, by which the Son of God became man. These three primitive writers, all of whom lived before the middle of the second century, led the way to their successors in the use of the word *οικονομια*; and the ancient way of explaining those passages which seemed to be inconsistent with the divinity of our Saviour, was to refer them to the *οικονομια*.

The same thing is meant by the modern distinction, according to which some things are said to be spoken of our Saviour in his human nature, and others in his divine. It is allowed that the words divine and human nature of Christ are not found in Scripture. But it cannot be denied that he is there spoken of sometimes as God and sometimes as man, and that some propositions which would appear to be false, if he were only God, and others which would appear to be false, if he were only a man, are affirmed concerning him who is both God and man. We conceive, therefore, that the Scriptures, although they do not use the words, afford us a sufficient warrant for the modern distinction: and we learn from numberless instances in which the distinction is clearly implied, to exercise our judgment in interpreting those passages which have some degree of obscurity, according to either the divine or the human nature of Christ, as may best preserve the analogy of faith.

* *Judicium Ecc. Cath. cap. v. p. 45.*

I shall give you a specimen of this use of the ancient and modern distinctions, by applying them to the explication of passages respecting the three following subjects, the humiliation of Jesus, his exaltation, and the termination of that kingdom which is said to have been given him.

1. The ancient and modern distinction suggested by the doctrine of Scripture concerning the incarnation of Christ, is of use to explain the descriptions that are given of his humiliation. It is said that "Christ came down from heaven;" that he who "was rich became poor;" that "he was made a little lower than the angels;" that *ἐκενώσεν ἑαυτόν*, which we render "made himself of no reputation," but which properly means, emptied himself of that which he had. Now it has been asked with triumph by those who deny the original dignity of our Saviour's person, how a God could leave heaven; how it is consistent with the character of the Creator and Ruler of the universe to desert his station, and confine himself for thirty years within a human body; and how his place was supplied during this temporary relinquishment of the care of all things? The answer to these questions is derived from the distinction of which we are speaking, *i. e.* the expressions now quoted are to be referred to the *οικονομία*. They do not imply any change upon the divine nature of Christ, which by being divine is incapable of change; they do not mean that the powers of the Godhead were impaired or suspended, but only that the exercise of them was concealed from the eyes of mortals, and that the form of God, which Jesus had before the worlds were made, was veiled by the humanity which he assumed. For, as Eusebius speaks. (see Bull, 275,) "he was not so entangled with the chains of flesh as to be confined to that place where his body was, and restrained from being in any other; but at the very time when he dwelt with men, he filled all things, he was with the Father, and he took care of all things which are in heaven and which are in earth." And all this is but a commentary upon these words of our Lord, John iii. 13. "And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the son of man which is in heaven;" who is in heaven at the very time when the body with which he has united himself is upon earth. The same distinction suggests the proper interpretation of those phrases in which our Lord speaks of himself according to the language of the prophet Isaiah, as the servant of God. "As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. As my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him who sent me."* The Apostle to the Hebrews, v. 7, 8, speaks still more strongly. Now if we knew nothing more of Jesus than these passages contain, we could not hesitate to admit all that inferiority to the Supreme Being which the Arians or even the Socinians teach. But if we recollect that the attributes and names of God are elsewhere applied to him, then according to the rules of sound criticism, which teach us to adopt that interpretation by which an author is made consistent with himself, we must refer the passages containing that strong language to the *οικονομία*, and consider them as spoken of the man Jesus Christ,

* John xiv. 31; viii. 28; vi. 38.

who at his incarnation became the minister of his Father's will, who, as man, prayed and gave thanks to his God, and whose human nature admitted of learning, and suffering, and strong crying, and fear.

In the same manner we are accustomed to explain that remarkable expression of our Lord, Mark xiii. 32: "Of that day knoweth no man, no, not the angels, neither the Son, but the Father." The Son of God cannot be ignorant of the day of judgment. For we read, that in him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" that "the Father showeth the Son all things that himself doth;" that "no man knoweth the Father, save the Son."* We are obliged, therefore, to have recourse to the distinction between the divine and human nature of Christ: and as the expression, Luke ii. 52, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature," unquestionably means that the human soul which animated his body improved as his body grew, although the *λογος* united to the soul knew all things from the beginning, so here the Son, considered as the Son of man, by which name our Lord had spoken of himself at the 26th verse, is said to be ignorant of that which the Son of God certainly knew.

2. We avail ourselves of the same distinction to explain what is said in Scripture concerning the exaltation of Jesus. You read in numberless places of a dominion being given to Jesus, of his receiving power from the Father, of his overcoming and entering into his glory. You find the connection between his sufferings and his exaltation stated explicitly, Heb. ii. 9, and Phil. ii. 8, 9, 10; and the words of our Lord, John v. 26, 27, appear to be to the same purpose. The inference obviously drawn from such passages is this, that Jesus Christ received from God the Father a recompense for his obedience and sufferings in procuring our salvation; that this recompense was not only the highest honour and felicity conferred on himself, but also a sovereignty over those whom he had redeemed; and that thus by his recompense there is derived to him from God a right to the worship and service of the human race.

It is so agreeable to our natural sense of justice, that eminent virtue should be crowned with an illustrious reward; it is so flattering to our ideas of the dignity of human nature, to behold a man raised by the excellence of his character to the government of the universe, that this inference constitutes by much the most pleasing part of the Socinian system: and as it may be stated in such a manner as to be perfectly consistent with that doctrine which you profess to teach, you will find that you cannot introduce into your sermons a more popular topic of exhortation, and of encouragement to persevering exertion in the discharge of our duty.

But pleasing and useful as this view of the exaltation of Jesus is, it plainly does not contain the whole account of the matter, for the following reasons:—1. Some of the very passages which speak of a recompense being given to Jesus had declared, a little before, the original dignity of his person. He had been styled in the Epistle to the Hebrews, "the brightness of the Father's glory;" in the Epistle to the Philippians, "he who was in the form of God;" and he had said

* Col. ii. 3. John v. 20. Matt. xi. 27.

of himself, John v. 19, "What things soever the Father doth, these also doth the Son likewise." 2. Many passages of Scripture, by declaring that Jesus Christ created all things, teach us that before he obeyed or suffered in the flesh, he possessed a clear title to universal dominion. And, 3. This original dignity of person, and this most ancient title to dominion, are of such a kind that it was impossible for them to receive any accession. He who is the image of the invisible God could not by any new state be rendered more glorious or more happy; and no gift or subsequent appointment could constitute a more perfect right, or a more complete subjection of all things to Jesus Christ, than that which arose from his being the Word by whom all things were made, and by whom they consist.

For these reasons it is manifest that if we consider Christ only as the Son of God, his exaltation can mean nothing more than that his original title to dominion was published by the preaching of the gospel, and universally recognized, and that to this original title there was superadded the new title of Redeemer of the world. But this is not a full explication of all the places in which his exaltation is spoken of; for the passages quoted from the Hebrews, the Philippians, and from John, lead us to attend, in the very appointment of this dominion, to the incarnation of the Son of God. The dominion is said to be given him because he is the Son of Man—for the suffering of death—because he humbled himself; and we are thus obliged, in explaining that dominion, to have recourse to the ancient and modern distinction which we are now applying. It is part of the *οικονομία*, which the Scriptures teach, that, as the Son of God, when he was made flesh, veiled his glory, so after his resurrection, the flesh which he had assumed was exalted to partake of that glory. All that from the beginning had appertained to the Son of God, is now declared to belong to that person who is both God and man: and he is invested with the office of Ruler and Judge, in the execution of which he completes that work which he began, when he was made flesh. It is not, therefore, in respect of the divine nature of Christ, which does not admit of a recompense, but in respect of his human nature, that his exaltation is stated under the notion of a reward: the scandal attending his humiliation is thereby completely removed: and the declaration of his appointment to the sovereignty of the universe is the provision which God hath made, that, notwithstanding his humiliation, "all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."

3. By the same distinction we are enabled to account for what is said in Scripture concerning the termination of the dominion given to Christ. The words of the Apostle Paul upon this subject, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25, 28, cannot mean that the dominion of Christ, which is founded on his having created all things, shall come to an end; for this must continue as long as any creature exists; neither can they mean that the gratitude and worship of those whom he redeemed by his blood, and that right to their obedience which arises from his interposition, shall ever cease: for this is an obligation which must co-exist with the souls of the redeemed. Accordingly, John heard every creature in heaven and in earth saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb

for ever and ever :”* and the kingdom of Christ is represented, both in the Old and in the New Testament, as everlasting. The meaning, therefore, of the words of the Apostle must be, that the office with which the Son of Man was invested, in order to carry into full effect the purposes of his incarnation, which divines are accustomed to call his mediatorial kingdom, shall cease when these purposes are accomplished. His authority to execute judgment must expire, after the quick and the dead have received according to their works : and he can no longer rule in the midst of his enemies, after they are all put under his feet. Every thing which the ancient theological writers meant by *οικονομία* will then be concluded : and although the Son of God never can lay aside his relation to those whom by that economy he hath brought to his Father, yet the office implied under the character of Mediator, which had a reference to their preparation for heaven, can have no place amongst the glorified saints, but God shall be all in all, and the Son shall reign in the glory which he had with the Father before the world was.

In this manner, from the union between the divine and human natures of Christ, and the communication of the properties of the two natures, we are able to deduce an explication of several passages of Scripture which would otherwise appear unintelligible. There is one other use of the doctrine concerning the incarnation, which is clearly stated in Scripture, and with which I close all that relates particularly to the person of Jesus Christ.

It is by the union of the natures in one person that Christ is qualified to be the Saviour of the world. He became man, that with the greatest possible advantage to those whom he was sent to instruct, he might teach them the nature and the will of God ; that his life might be their example ; that by being once compassed with the infirmities of human nature, he might give them assurance of his fellow-feeling ; that by suffering on the cross he might make atonement for their sins ; and that in his reward they might behold the earnest and the pattern of theirs.

But had Jesus been only man, or had he been one of the spirits that surround the throne of God, he could not have accomplished the work which he undertook ; for the whole obedience of every creature being due to the Creator, no part of that obedience can be placed to the account of other creatures, so as to supply the defects of their service, or to rescue them from the punishment which they deserve. The Scriptures, therefore, reveal, that he who appeared upon earth as man is also God, and, as God, was mighty to save ; and by this revelation they teach us that the merit of our Lord’s obedience, and the efficacy of his interposition, depend upon the hypostatical union.†

All modern sects of Christians agree in admitting that the greatest benefits arise to us from the Saviour of the world being man ; but the Arians and Socinians contend earnestly, that his sufferings do not derive any value from his being God ; and their reasoning is specious.

* Rev. v. 13.

† Ἦνωσεν οὖν τὸν ἀνθρώπου τῷ Θεῷ.—Ἐδει γὰρ μεσότην Θεοῦ τε καὶ ἀνθρώπων διὰ τῆς ἰδίας πρὸς ἑκατέρους οἰκειότητος εἰς φιλίαν καὶ ὁμονοίαν τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους συναγαγεῖν. Iren. cont. Hær. lib. iii. cap. 187.

You say, they argue, that Jesus Christ who suffered for the sins of men, is both God and man. You must either say that God suffered, or that he did not suffer; if you say that God suffered, you do indeed affix an infinite value to the sufferings, but you affirm that the Godhead is capable of suffering, which is both impious and absurd: if you say that God did not suffer, then, although the person that suffered had both a divine and a human nature, the sufferings were merely those of a man, for, according to your own system, the two natures are distinct, and the divine is impassible.

In answer to this method of arguing, we admit that the Godhead cannot suffer, and we do not pretend to explain the kind of support which the human nature derived under its sufferings from the divine, or the manner in which the two were united. But from the uniform language of Scripture, which magnifies the love of God in giving his only begotten Son, which speaks in the highest terms of the preciousness of the blood of Christ, which represents him as coming in the body that was prepared for him, to do that which sacrifice and burnt-offering could not do—from all this we infer that there was a value, a merit, in the sufferings of this Person, superior to that which belonged to the sufferings of any other: and as the same Scriptures intimate in numberless places the strictest union between the divine and human natures of Christ, by applying to him promiscuously the actions which belong to each nature, we hold that it is impossible for us to separate in our imagination this peculiar value which they affix to his sufferings, from the peculiar dignity of his person.

The hypostatical union, then, is the corner-stone of our religion. We are too much accustomed, in all our researches, to perceive that things are united, without being able to investigate the bond which unites them, to feel any degree of surprise that we cannot answer all the questions which ingenious men have proposed upon this subject: but we can clearly discern, in those purposes of the incarnation of the Son of God which the Scriptures declare, the reason why they have dwelt so largely upon his divinity; and if we are careful to take into our view the whole of that description which they give of the person by whom the remedy in the gospel was brought; if, in our speculations concerning him, we neither lose sight of the two parts which are clearly revealed, nor forget, what we cannot comprehend, that union between the two parts which is necessarily implied in the revelation of them, we shall perceive in the character of the Messiah, a completeness, and a suitableness to the design of his coming, which of themselves create a strong presumption that we have rightly interpreted the Scriptures.

CHAPTER IX.

OPINIONS CONCERNING THE SPIRIT.

I HAVE now given a view of the different opinions that have been held concerning that person, by whom the remedy offered in the gospel was brought to the world. But there is also revealed to us another person by whom that remedy is applied, who is known in Scripture by the name of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Holy Ghost; and whom our Lord, in different places of that long discourse which John has recorded in chaps. xiv. xv. and xvi. of his gospel, calls *παράκλητος*. When you read John xv. 26, you cannot avoid considering ὁ παράκλητος as the same with το πνευμα, and as a person distinct from the Father and the Son. *Παράκλητος* is derived from *παράκαλεω*, the precise meaning of which is, “standing by the side of a person I call upon him to do something,” and which is commonly translated, “I comfort or encourage.” Hence the word *παράκλητος* is rendered in our Bibles the Comforter; but if you attend to the analogy of the Greek language, you will perceive that the manner in which it is formed from the verb, suggests as the more literal interpretation of the noun *advocatus*, advocate, “one who, being called in, stands by the side of others to assist them.”

Of the offices of this person I shall have to speak, when I proceed in the progress of my plan to the application of the remedy. At present I have only to state the information which the Scriptures afford, and the different opinions to which that information has given rise, concerning the character of this person. The subject lies within a much narrower compass than that which I have just finished.

Dr. Clarke has collected, in his *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*, all the passages of the New Testament in which the Spirit is mentioned. They are very numerous; they have been differently interpreted; and corresponding to this difference of interpretation is the variety of opinions which have been held concerning this person. The simplest method in which I can state the progress of these opinions, is to begin with directing your attention to the form of baptism taught by our Lord, Matt. xxviii. 19. Baptism, or washing, is found in the religious ceremonies of all nations. Among the heathen, the initiated after having been instructed in certain hidden doctrines and awful rites were baptized into these mysteries. The Israelites are said by the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. x. 2, to have been baptized into Moses, at the time when they followed him as the servant of God, sent to lead them through the Red Sea.

Proselytes to the law of Moses from other nations were received by

baptism; and all the people who went out to hear John, the forerunner of Jesus, were baptized by him into the baptism of repentance. In accommodation to this general practice, Jesus, having employed his apostles to baptize those who came to him during his ministry, sent them forth, after his ascension, to make disciples of all nations by baptizing them. But, in order to render baptism a distinguishing rite, by which his followers might be separated from the followers of any other teacher who chose to baptize, he added these words, "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The earliest Christian writers inform us that this solemn form of expression was uniformly employed from the beginning of the Christian church. It is true, indeed, that the Apostle Peter said to those who were converted on the day of Pentecost, Acts ii. 38, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ;" and that, in different places of the book of Acts, it is said that persons were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus: and from hence those, who deny the argument which I am about to draw from the form of baptism, have inferred that, in the days of the apostles, this form was not rigorously observed. But a little attention will satisfy you that the inference does not follow, because there is internal evidence from the New Testament itself, that when the historian says, persons were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, he means they were baptized according to the form prescribed by Jesus. Thus the question put by Paul, Acts xix. 2, 3, shows that he did not suppose it possible for any person who administered Christian baptism to omit the mention of the Holy Ghost; and even after this question, the historian, when he informs us that the disciples were baptized, is not solicitous to repeat the whole form, but says in his usual manner, Acts xix. 5, "when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." There is another question put by the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. i. 13, which shows us in what light he viewed the form of baptism. The question implies his considering the form of baptism as so sacred, that the introducing the name of a teacher into it was the same thing as introducing a new master into the kingdom of Christ.

There is nothing, then, in the New Testament contrary to the clear information which we derive from the succession of Christian writers, who agree in declaring that the form of baptism originally prescribed by Jesus was from the beginning observed upon every occasion. At a time when Christianity was not the established religion of the state, but was spreading rapidly through the Roman empire, many were daily baptized who had been educated in the knowledge and belief of other religions, and baptism was their initiation into the faith of Christ. In order to prepare them for this solemn act, they received instruction for many days in the principal articles of the Christian faith, particularly in the knowledge of the three Persons into whose name they were to be baptized, and they were required at their baptism to declare that they believed what they had been taught. The practice of connecting instruction with the administration of baptism rests upon apostolical authority;* and upon this was probably founded the following practice, which we learn from early writers to

* Acts viii. 35—38. Rom. x. 10. 1 Pet. iii. 21.

have been universal. Those who were to be baptized underwent a preparation, during which they were called, in the Greek church, *κατηχουμενοι*; in the Latin church, *competentes*. *Κατηχουμενοι* is derived from *κατηχεω*, a compound of *κατα* and *ηχεω*, *sono*, which implies that they were instructed *viva voce* by catechists, whose business it was to deliver to them in the most familiar manner the rudiments of the doctrine of Christ: *Competentes*, competitors, or candidates, implies that they were seeking together the honour of being initiated into Christianity. When the catechumens or competentes were judged to have attained a sufficient measure of knowledge, they were brought to the baptismal font, and immediately before their baptism two things were required of them. The one was called *αποταξις του Σατανα*, *segregatio a Satana*; the other, *συνταξις προς Χριστον*, *aggregatio ad Christum*. By the one they renounced, in a form of words that was prescribed to them, the devil, his works, his worship, and all his pomp, *i. e.* they professed their resolution to forsake both vice and idolatry: by the other, they declared their faith in those articles in which they had been instructed. The most ancient method of declaring this faith was taken from the form of baptism. The person to be baptized said, "I believe in God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." By these words, he professed that his faith embraced that whole name into which he was to be baptized; and the creeds, which came to be used in different churches, appear to have been only enlargements of this original declaration, the substance of which was retained in all of them, but was extended or explained by insertions which were meant to oppose errors in doctrine as they sprang up, and which consequently varied in every church according to the nature of the errors that prevailed there, and the light in which these errors were viewed. Every church required its catechumens to repeat its own creed before they were baptized, so that the repetition of the creed was a declaration on the part of the catechumens, that their faith in the name into which they were to be baptized was the same with that of the church from which they were to receive baptism.

It appears by this deduction, that faith in the Holy Ghost was a branch of the rudiments of Christianity, derived from that form by which our Lord appointed disciples to be initiated into his religion; and in this form you will observe that the Holy Ghost is conjoined with the Father and the Son, in such a manner as obviously to imply that he is a person of equal rank with them. When you recollect the exalted conceptions which the gospel gives of the Father, and the full revelation which it has made of the dignity of the Son; when you recollect that there is authority in the New Testament for worshipping the Son as the Father; and when you consider further that the persons who professed their faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, did at the very same time renounce the worship of idols, you will acknowledge that there is an unaccountable ambiguity in the expression prescribed by our Lord; nay, that the form used upon his authority has a necessary tendency to lead Christians into the practice of idolatry which they then renounced, unless the Holy Ghost be, with the Father and the Son, an object of worship. This clear inference from the form of baptism was probably confirmed in the

earliest ages by its being observed, that, besides all those places of the New Testament which teach us to reverence the Spirit, there is one passage where the Apostle Paul has joined the three persons together in such a manner as seems intended to convey to his readers a conception of the equality of their rank.* “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.”

Upon these authorities the Christian church, from the very beginning, worshipped the Holy Ghost. There is clear evidence of this fact, in a passage from Justin Martyr,† whom we are accustomed to quote as the best voucher of the opinions and the practices of early times. The succession of Christian writers from Justin say the same thing, and the Spirit is conjoined with the Father and the Son in the most ancient doxologies. But it was a principle with the first Christians, *τον Θεον μόνον δεῖ προσκυνεῖν*. The worship of any creature was in their eyes idolatry; and therefore their worshipping the Holy Ghost was expressing by their practice the same inference which they draw in their writings from the form of baptism, viz. that the Holy Ghost is a person of the same rank with the Father and the Son.

If this uniform testimony of the Christian writers could be supposed to require any support, we might quote a dialogue entitled *Philopatris*, commonly ascribed to Lucian, and certainly written either by him, or by some contemporary of his, about the middle of the second century. The author means to give a ludicrous representation of the manner in which the catechumens were instructed, and amongst other circumstances, he introduces the following‡. The scholar asks by whom he should swear, and the christian instructor answers in words which imply that the Christians, in the days of Lucian, were accustomed to swear by all the three Persons mentioned. But as swearing by a Person is one of those honours which are most properly called divine, Lucian infers, from this part of the practice of the Christians, that in their estimation every one of the three Persons was *Ζεὺς καὶ Θεός*; and thus his testimony comes to be a voucher of both the opinions and the practice of the great body of Christians with regard to the Holy Ghost.

During the first three centuries, there was not any particular controversy upon this subject, except that which was occasioned by the system of the Gnostics. The numerous sects that come under this description, who corrupted the simplicity of the gospel by a mixture of the tenets of oriental philosophy, held both Christ and the Spirit to be *Æons*, emanations from the Supreme Mind. But as they denied the divine original of the books of Moses, they said that the Spirit, which had inspired him and the prophets, was not that exalted *Æon* whom God sent forth after the ascension of Christ, but an *Æon*

* 2 Cor. xiii. 13.

† *Ἀλλ' ἐχεινόν τε (πατέρα,) καὶ τὸν παρ' αὐτοῦ υἱὸν ἐλθόντα, καὶ διδασκάντα ἡμᾶς ταῦτα καὶ τὸν τῶν ἄλλων ἑτοίμενον καὶ ἐξομοιούμενον ἀγαθῶν ἀγγέλων στρατῶν. πνεῦμα τε τὸ προφητικὸν σεβόμεθα καὶ προσκυνούμεν, λόγῳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ τιμῶντες.* See Bull, Def. 70.

‡ See Bull, Def. F. N. 73, and Jud. 32.

very much inferior, and removed at a great distance from the Supreme Being. It was, on the other hand, the general belief of the Christian church, that the same Spirit who was afterwards sent to the apostles had operated in the saints from the beginning; and the character uniformly given of the Spirit by Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and the other primitive writers, was in such words as these: *το προφητικον πνευμα*—*το δια των προφητων κεκρυμμενος τας οικονομιας Θεου*. In order, therefore, to oppose the errors of the Gnostics, there came to be introduced into the creed of the church of Jerusalem, which was honoured throughout the east as the mother of all the churches, in addition to the original words, “I believe *εις το ἅγιον πνευμα*,” the following, “*το παρακλητον. το λαλησαν δια των προφητων*.” We know that Cyril, who was Bishop of Jerusalem in the fourth century, wrote an exposition of the creed of which these words are a part; and we learn from his writings, that this creed was explained to the catechumens in the church of Jerusalem, and that they were required to repeat it before they received baptism.

Here the matter rested till after the time of the Arian controversy. As Arius held the Son to be the most excellent creature of God, by whom all others were created, the Spirit was necessarily ranked by him amongst the productions of the Son: and accordingly the ancient writers who have left an account of the heresy of Arius, say that he made the Spirit *πτισμα πτισματος*, the creature of a creature. But as his attacks were chiefly directed against the divinity of the Son, and as his opinions concerning the Spirit were only an inference from the leading principles of his system, they did not draw any particular attention in the council of Nice. This first general council, which met A. D. 325, published the creed, which is known by the name of the Nicene creed, in direct opposition to the errors of Arius. Accordingly, they are added in this creed to the second article of the ancient creeds, that concerning the Son, several clauses which were meant to declare the dignity of his person, and his consubstantiality with the Father; but the third article, that concerning the Spirit, is continued in the same simple mode of expression which had been originally suggested by the form of baptism, *και εις το πνευμα το ἅγιον*.

In the course of the fourth century, Macedonius, who held a particular modification of the Arian system concerning the Son, following out the principles of that system, openly denied the divinity of the Spirit, and was the founder of a sect, known in those times by the name *Πνευματομαχοι*. Macedonius is said by some to have denied that the Holy Ghost is a person distinct from the Father, and to have considered what the Scriptures call the Spirit, as only a divine energy diffused throughout creation. According to others, he held the Spirit to be a creature, the servant of the Most High God. We are not acquainted with the detail of his opinions. We only know in general that he did not admit, what in his time had been generally received in the Christian church, that the Holy Spirit is a person of the same divine nature with the Father and the Son; and we have the clearest evidence that the opinion of Macedonius appeared to the church to be an innovation in the ancient faith. For as the first general council, the council of Nice, had, A. D. 325, condemned the opinions of Arius with regard to the Son, so the second general council, the

council of Constantinople, A. D. 381, condemned the opinions of Macedonius with regard to the Spirit. The council of Nice testified their disapprobation of the opinions of Arius, and guarded those who should be received into the Christian church against his errors, by the additions which they made to the second article of the ancient creeds; and the council of Constantinople, in like manner, entered their testimony against the errors of Macedonius by the following change upon that creed which had been used in the church of Jerusalem, and which appears to have been the same in substance with that used throughout the Christian world. The third article of the ancient creed had run thus, *εις το ἅγιον πνευμα, το παρακλητον, το λαλησαν δια των προφητων*. Instead of *το παρακλητον*, which might be conceived to convey a notice of inferiority and ministration in the Holy Ghost, the council of Constantinople introduced the following expressions: *Και εις το πνευμα το ἅγιον, το κυριον το ζωοποιουν, το εκ του πατρος εκπορευομενον, το συν πατρι και υιω προσκυνημενον και συνδοξαζομενον, το λαλησαν δια των προφητων*.

The expressions inserted instead of *το παρακλητον*, were intended to declare, what the natural import of the words very strongly conveys, that majesty of character in the Holy Ghost, and that equality with the Father and the Son in worship and glory, which those who are admitted to Christian baptism after being catechumens had been taught, in the application of the original form, to believe, and which it does not appear that the great body of the church, till the time of Macedonius, had ever thought of questioning.

When, in the sixteenth century, opinions concerning the Son, much bolder than those which had been held by Arius, or any of his followers, were avowed and published by Socinus, it was not possible that he could acquiesce in the received creed concerning the Spirit: and the opinion which he adopted upon this subject was the same with that refined system which has been ascribed by some to Macedonius. Socinus did not say that the Holy Ghost is a creature; he said that it is the power and energy of God sent from heaven to men; that by its being given without measure, as the Scriptures speak, to Jesus Christ, this great Prophet was sanctified, and led, and raised above all the other messengers of heaven; that by the extraordinary measure in which it was given to his apostles, they were qualified for executing their commission; and that it is still communicated in such manner and such degree as is necessary for the comfort and sanctification of the disciples of Jesus.

This is the system of the modern Socinians, which Lardner has brought forward in some pieces that are published in the tenth and eleventh volumes of his works, and which is found often recurring in the writings of Priestly and Lindsey. The arguments upon which this system rests are of the following kind. An attempt is made to reconcile with this system all those passages of Scripture which seem to imply that the Holy Ghost is a distinct person; it is said that the Spirit of God sometimes denotes the power or wisdom of God, as they are communicated to men, *i. e.* spiritual gifts; that it is sometimes merely a circumlocution for God himself; and that when the Spirit of God appears to be spoken of as a person, we are to understand that there is a figure of speech, the same kind of *prosopopœia* by which it is said that charity is kind and envieth not—that sin

deceives and slays us—and that the law speaks. It is allowed that the figure is variously used in different places; but it is alleged, that, by a moderate exercise of critical sagacity, all those passages of the New Testament, in which the Spirit of God is mentioned, may be explained without our being obliged to suppose that a person is denoted by that expression.

This is the Socinian mode of arguing with regard to the Holy Ghost. Upon the other side, it is argued by Bishop Pearson, who has treated the subject very fully and distinctly in his Exposition of the Creed; by Dr. Barrow, in one of his Sermons on the Creed; by Bishop Burnet, on the Thirty-nine Articles, and by others, that numberless actions and operations which unavoidably convey the idea of a person are ascribed to the Holy Ghost—that there are many places in which neither *prosopopœia* nor any other figure of speech can account for this manner of speaking—and that the attributes, and names, and description of this person, are such as clearly imply that he is no creature, but truly God.

The subject, it may be seen, from this general account of the argument upon both sides, runs out into a long detail of minute criticism. Without attempting to enter into this, I will only suggest four general observations, which it is proper to carry along with you when you examine those passages which Dr. Clarke has fairly collected in his Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, and upon which the other writers argue.

1. In many places of Scripture, “the Spirit of God” may be a circumlocution for God himself, or for the power and wisdom of God. Thus, when we read, “whither shall I go from thy spirit, and whither shall I flee from thy presence?”—“they vexed his holy spirit”—“by his spirit he hath garnished the heavens;” or when Jesus says, “If I by the Spirit of God;” in another gospel it is, “if I by the finger of God cast out devils,” it is not more reasonable to infer from these expressions that the Spirit of God is a person distinct from God, than it would be to suppose that, when we speak of the spirit of a man, we mean a person distinct from the man himself. You will not think that, because the circumlocution, for which the Socinians contend, does not give the true explication of all the passages to which they wish to apply it, there is no instance of its being used in Scripture: and you will always carry along with you this general rule of scripture criticism, that it is most unbecoming those, who profess to derive all their knowledge of theology from the Scriptures, to strain texts in order to make them appear to support particular doctrines, and that there never can be any danger to truth, in adopting that interpretation of Scripture which is the most natural and rational.

2. There are many passages in which “the Spirit of God” means gifts or powers communicated to men, and from which we are not warranted to infer that there is a person who is the fountain and distributor of these gifts. So we read often in the Old Testament, “the Spirit of the Lord came upon him,” when nothing more is necessarily implied under the expression, than that the person spoken of was endowed with an extraordinary degree of skill, or might or wisdom. So the promises of the Old Testament, “I will pour out my Spirit upon you,” were fulfilled under the New Testament, by what are

there called “the gifts of the Holy Ghost;” in reference to which we read, “that Christians received the Holy Ghost”—“that the Holy Ghost was given to them”—“that they were filled with the Spirit.” Neither the words of the promise, nor the words that relate the fulfilment of it, suggest the personality of the Spirit; and if we knew nothing more than what such passages suggest, the Socinian system upon this subject would exhaust the meaning of Scripture, and the Spirit would appear to be merely a virtue or energy proceeding from God.

3. But my third observation is, that if there are passages in which the Holy Ghost is clearly and unequivocally described as a person, then, however numerous the passages may be in which “the Spirit of God” appears to be a phrase meaning gifts and powers communicated to men, this does not in the least invalidate the evidence of the personality of the Spirit, because it is a most natural and intelligible figure to express the gifts and powers by the name of that person who is represented as the distributor of them. The true method, then, of stating the question upon this subject between the Socinians and other Christians, is not, whether it be possible to interpret a great number of passages that speak of the Spirit of God, without being obliged to suppose that there is a distinct Person to whom this name is given, but whether there are not some passages by which the personality of the Spirit may be clearly ascertained.

There are two passages of this last kind to which I would direct your attention. The first is, the long discourse of our Lord, in chaps. xiv. xv. and xvi. of John’s Gospel, where, in promising the Holy Ghost to the apostles, he describes him as a person who was to be sent and to come, who hears, and speaks, and reproveth, and instructs; as a person different from Jesus, because he was to come after Jesus departed, because he was to be sent by Christ, and to receive of Christ, and to glorify Christ; as a person different from the Father, because he was to be sent by the Father, and because he was not to speak of himself, but to speak what he should hear. The second passage is a discourse of the Apostle Paul, 1 Cor. xii. 1—13, where the apostle, in speaking of the diversities of spiritual gifts, represents them as under the administration of one Spirit. It is impossible to conceive words which can mark more strongly than the 11th verse does, that there is a Person who is the author of all spiritual gifts, and who distributes them according to his discretion.

You will meet, in the collection of texts upon this subject, with many other passages which show that the apostles considered the Spirit as a person: and to the inference obviously suggested by all these passages, you are to add this general consideration, that as the *prosopopœia*, to which the Socinians have recourse in order to evade the evidence of the personality of the Spirit, appears to be forced and unnatural, when it is applied to the long discourse recorded by John, so the supposition of any such *prosopopœia* being there intended, is rendered incredible by our Lord’s introducing, after that discourse, the Holy Ghost in the form of baptism, and thus conjoining the Holy Ghost, whom he had described as a person, with the Father and the Son, who are certainly known to be persons. There is, in all this, a continued train of argument, so much fitted to impress our minds with

a conviction of the personality of the Spirit, that, if the Socinian system on this subject be true, it will be hard to fix upon any inference from the language of Scripture in which our minds may safely acquiesce.

4. My fourth observation is, that if the Spirit of God be a person, it follows of course that he is God. I do not say that the Spirit is anywhere in Scripture directly called God: and although the writers on this subject have repeatedly said that this name is given him by implication, because, Acts v. 3, 4, lying to the Holy Ghost is stated as the same as lying to God; and our bodies are called, 1 Cor. vi. 19, the temple of the Holy Ghost, and 1 Cor. iii. 16, the temple of God, yet I would not rest so important an article of faith upon this kind of verbal criticism. The clear proof of the divinity of the Holy Ghost may in my opinion be thus shortly stated. Since all spiritual gifts are represented as being placed under the administration of this person; since blasphemy against him is declared to be an unpardonable sin; since our Lord commands Christians to be baptized into the name of this person as well as into the name of the Father and the Son; and since the apostle Paul prays or wishes for the communion of the Holy Ghost as for the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God, it is plain that the Scriptures teach us to honour and worship this person as we honour the Father and the Son; and it is not to be supposed that if he bore to these two persons the relation of a creature to the Creator, we should be in this manner led to consider all the three as of the same nature.

So much force is there in this argument, that the supposition of the Spirit's being a creature has long been abandoned. It has not even that support which the Socinian opinion concerning Jesus Christ appears to derive from the expressions relating to his humanity. The Spirit is nowhere spoken of in those humble terms which belong to the man Christ Jesus: and they who are not disposed to admit his divinity, finding no warrant for affixing to him any lower character, are obliged to deny his existence, by resolving all that is said of him into a figure of speech.

Your business, therefore, in studying the controversy concerning the Spirit, is to examine whether this figure of speech, which is natural in some passages, can be admitted as the explication of all; or whether the impropriety of attempting to introduce it into some places where the Spirit is described, be not so glaring as to leave a conviction upon the mind of every candid inquirer, that the Scriptures reveal to us a third person, whose agency is exerted in accomplishing the purposes of the Gospel: and if your minds are satisfied of the personality of the Spirit, you have next to examine whether the descriptions of this person, being incompatible with the notion of that inferiority of character which belongs to a creature, do not lead you to consider him as truly and properly God.

CHAPTER X.

DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.

FROM the information which is given us concerning the two persons whom the Gospel reveals, it appears to follow that both the Son and the Holy Ghost are truly and essentially God. But this communication of the attributes, the names, and the honours which belong to God the Father, implies that these two persons have an intimate connexion with him, and with one another: and we are thus led, after considering the two persons singly, to attend to the manner in which they are united with the Father. For when reason is able to deduce from Scripture that there are three persons, each of whom is God, that curiosity, which is inseparable from the exercise of our powers, renders her solicitous to investigate the connexion that subsists amongst the three: and it is not till after she has made many unsuccessful attempts, that she is forced to acquiesce in a consciousness of her inability to form a clear apprehension of the subject.

I am now therefore to subjoin to the Scripture account of the Son and the Holy Ghost, a view of the opinions that have been held concerning the manner in which they are united with the Father: a subject which is known in theology by the name of the Doctrine of the Trinity. In stating these opinions, I shall not recite a great deal that I have read without being able to penetrate its meaning; nor shall I attempt to go minutely through all the shades of difference that may be traced; but I shall produce the fruit which I gathered from a wearisome perusal of many authors, by marking the great outlines of the three systems upon this subject, which stand forth most clearly distinguished from one another. I shall give them the names of the Sabellian, the Arian, and the Catholic systems. I call the third the Catholic system, because it is the opinion concerning the Trinity which has generally obtained in the Christian Church.

SECTION I.

THE point, from which a simple distinct exposition of opinions concerning the Trinity sets out, is that fundamental doctrine of natural religion, the unity of God. Although the heathens multiplied gods, yet, even in their popular mythology, a wide distinction was made between the subordinate deities and that Supreme Being from whom they were derived, and by whom they were controlled; and the more enlightened that the mind of any philosopher became, he rose the nearer to an apprehension of the divine unity. Our notions of

the perfection of the divine nature involve the idea of unity; and that nice analogy of parts, which a skilful observer discovers in the works of nature and Providence, is an experimental confirmation of all the reasonings upon which this idea is founded. The law of Moses, which separated the Jews from the worship of the gods of the nations, declares that there is none other besides him, and asserts his unity in these words, Deut. vi. 4, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord." Our Saviour, Mark xii. 32, adopts the unity of God as the principle of the first and great commandment of his religion. In another place, Mark x. 18, he disclaims the appellation of good, saying, "there is none good but one, that is God." The divine unity is asserted in the strongest terms by his apostles, "To us there is but one God, the only wise God, who only hath immortality."* It is said that those who were converted, "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;"† and we cannot read the New Testament without being strongly impressed with this truth, that the supposition of a number of gods, which philosophy and Judaism discard, is most repugnant to the perfect revelation made by Him who came from the bosom of the Father, to declare God to man.

If there be truth in this first principle of natural religion, so earnestly inculcated by the general strain of the New Testament, then the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost cannot be three Gods, but there must be a sense in which these three Persons are one God. Our Lord has been generally understood to intimate that there is such a sense, when he says, John x. 30, "I and my Father are one;" and his apostle says the same thing with regard to all the three, 1 John v. 7. It is proper, however, that you should be aware of the objections that have been made to this application of these two texts. With regard to the first, it has been said that the words of our Lord do not necessarily imply that unity of which we are speaking, and that, whether we consider the context, or the similar expressions which he uses in the seventeenth chapter of John, his words may mean no more than this, I and my Father are one in purpose, *i. e.* his power, which none can resist, is always exerted in carrying into effect my gracious designs towards my disciples. With regard to the second text, it has been said that the whole verse is an interpolation, because it is wanting in many Greek manuscripts, and because it is not quoted by any Christian father who wrote in Greek before the Council of Nice. The authenticity of this verse is certainly problematical, for very able judges have formed different opinions concerning it. Mill, the celebrated editor of the New Testament, in the beginning of the last century, after stating at great length the arguments upon both sides, gives it as his judgment, that the verse is genuine. But Griesbach, the latest editor of the New Testament, after a long investigation, declares in the most decided manner, that the strongest testimonies and arguments are against this verse; and that, if it is admitted upon the slight grounds which have been alleged in defence of it, *Textus Novi Testamenti universus plane incertus esset atque dubius*. This was also the opinion of Porson, the late celebrated Greek Professor in England, and of Herbert Marsh, the

* 1 Cor. viii. 6. 1 Tim. i. 17; vi. 16.

† 1 Thes. i. 9.

Editor of Michaelis. I must accede to such authorities—and I have further to say, that even although we should admit this verse, we cannot positively affirm that it teaches an unity of nature in three persons; for it may mean nothing more than an agreement in that record, which all the three are there said to bear.

It is not, then, upon this controverted verse in John's Epistle, nor upon the probability, however strong, that the emphatical words of our Lord, "I and my Father are one," mean something more than an unity of purpose, that the unity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost ought to be rested; but it is upon the following clear induction. The Scriptures, in conformity with right reason, declare that there is one God: at the same time, they lead us to consider every one of three Persons as truly God. But the one of these propositions must be employed to qualify the other; and therefore there certainly is some sense in which these three persons are one God. This induction is confirmed by the language of the New Testament, which never speaks of three Gods, but uniformly mentions these three persons in such a manner as to suggest an union of council and operation infinitely more perfect than any which we behold.

The force of the induction which I have now stated has been felt in all ages of the church. The earliest Christian writers, who paid the same honours to the Son and to the Holy Ghost as to the Father, declared their abhorrence of polytheism, and considered themselves as worshippers of the one true God. In the second century, the word *τριάς*, *trinitas*, was imported from the Platonic school, to express the union of the three persons; and the whole succession of Anti-Nicene fathers, although their illustrations are not always the most pertinent, discover by innumerable passages that they worshipped the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as constituting what Tertullian calls, in the second century, *Trinitas unius divinitatis*, and Cyprian, in the third, *Adunata trinitas*, and Athanasius, in the fourth, *αδιαίρετος τριάς*.

SECTION II.

THE first attempt, in the way of speculation, to reconcile with the unity of the Godhead what Christians had learnt to call the Trinity, was made in the second century by Praxeas, and was continued, in the beginning of the third century, by Noetus, and in the middle of it by Sabellius. There may be some shades of difference in the opinions of these three men: but as the leading parts of their system were the same, the names of Praxeas and Noetus came to be lost in the name of Sabellius, and the points common to all the three constitute that system of the Trinity which is known by the name of Sabellianism. According to this system, God is one Person, who, at his pleasure, presents to mortals the different aspects of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. In respect of his creating and preserving all things, he is the Father; in respect of what he did as the Redeemer of men, he is the Son; and in respect of those influences which he exerts in their sanctification, he is the Holy Ghost. The accounts which au-

cient writers give of the opinions of Sabellius lead us to think that he considered the distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost as merely nominal, calling God *ἑνὸς*. But several circumstances, collected by the acute and industrious Mosheim, render it probable that Sabellius conceived a ray or portion emitted from the divine substance to have been joined to the man Jesus Christ, in order to form the Son; so that his opinion concerning the Person of Christ coincided with that of the Gnostics, who considered Jesus Christ as a man to whom an emanation of the Supreme Mind was united, and with that of the modern Socinians, who consider the power and wisdom of God as dwelling in the man Christ Jesus. But even after this refinement upon the opinions of Praxeas and Noetus; God continued to be stated in this system as one person, who assumes different names from the different aspects, which himself or a part of himself presents: and the true character of Sabellianism is this, that it destroys the distinction of persons which the Scriptures teach, confounding the sender with the person sent, him that begat with him that is begotten, and the Holy Ghost with the Father, from whom he is said to proceed. Tertullian, who wrote against Praxeas in the second century, and the writers of the third who opposed Sabellius, urge with great strength of argument the various passages in which this distinction is expressed or implied: and that they might place in the most odious light the doctrine by which it was confounded, they gave to Sabellius and his followers the name of Patropassians, meaning to represent it as a consequence of their doctrine, that the God and Father of all had endured those sufferings which the Scriptures ascribe to Jesus Christ.

Sabellianism preserves in the most perfect manner the unity of God; and on this account it may appear to be the most philosophical scheme of the Trinity. But insuperable objections to it arise from the language and views introduced into the New Testament. Those who wrote after this system was first published, were so sensible of the force of these objections, that they discover an extreme solicitude to express clearly the distinction between the Father and the Son. They were sometimes led by this solicitude into modes of speaking, which have been represented as inconsistent with a belief of the divinity of the Son; and the great controversy which was agitated about a hundred years ago, with regard to the opinion of the Ante-Nicene fathers concerning the person of the Son, took its rise from this circumstance, that there being in their times some who denied the divinity of our Saviour, and others who denied the distinction of persons in the Godhead, these fathers wrote against both, and, from their zeal for the truth, or from the eagerness of controversy, used expressions in attacking the one of those heresies, which it is not easy to reconcile with the expressions used against the opposite heresy.

The language employed by some of the ancient writers in condemning Sabellianism encouraged Arius, about the beginning of the fourth century, to avoid every appearance of confounding the person of the Father and the Son, by broaching an opinion which his contemporaries represent as an innovation, till that time unheard of. He said that the Son was a creature who had no existence till he was made by God out of nothing—that his being begotten means nothing

more than his being made by the will of the Father—and that this peculiar term is applied to him, because he was made before all other creatures, that he might be the instrument of the Almighty in creating them. By this system Arius steered clear of Sabellianism, and at the same time he preserved the unity of God. For Jesus Christ, according to him, is in reality a creature, and only called God upon account of the offices in which he was employed, and the honour and dignity with which he was invested by the Father Almighty. To Arius, therefore, there was but one God, in the proper sense of that word: but as he admitted that Jesus Christ, a different person from the Father, was also God, because he was constituted God, his opinion must be stated as one of the ancient systems of the Trinity.

I have formerly explained,* at great length, the grounds upon which this opinion of Arius concerning the Son was rejected by the Christian church. At present I have to advert to the meaning of those terms in which the council of Nice, A. D. 325, expressed their condemnation of this opinion. The council, who knew the sense in which Arius applied the words God, and only begotten Son of God, to Jesus Christ, wished to frame such a creed as could not be repeated by those who held the Arian opinions; and with this view they made a large addition to the second article of the ancient creed, and annexed to the creed a condemnatory clause.†

The word, in this addition, which requires the most particular attention, upon account of its frequent use in the controversy concerning the Trinity, is *ὁμοουσιος*. It is compounded of *ὁμος*, *idem*, and *ουσια*, *substantia*; denoting that which is of the same substance or essence with another. It had been used by classical Greek writers in this sense. So Aristotle says, *ὁμοουσια πάντα αστερα*. It had been applied‡ by Christian writers long before the council of Nice, in the very sense in which it was used by the council: and it only expresses the amount of those images which had been employed by the succession of writers from the earliest times, to mark the relation between the Father and the Son, one of the most common and significant of which is introduced into the creed itself, *φως εκ φωτος*. As a derived light is the same in nature with the original light at which it was kindled, so, whatever be the meaning of *φως* when applied to the Father, the word must have the same meaning when the Son is called *φως εκ φωτος*.

* Book iii. ch. 1.

† Καὶ εἰς τὸν ἕνα Κυρίον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν, τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, γεννηθέντα ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς μονογενῆ, τούτεστιν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ πατρὸς· Θεὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ, φῶς ἐκ φωτός, Θεὸν ἀληθινὸν ἐκ Θεοῦ ἀληθινοῦ, γεννηθέντα οὐ ποιηθέντα, ὁμοουσίον τῷ πατρὶ, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο. καὶ τ. λ. τοὺς δὲ λεγόντας, ἣν ποτε, ὅτε οὐκ ἦν, καὶ πρὶν γεννηθῆναι, οὐκ ἦν, καὶ ὅτι ἐξ οὐκ οὐτῶν ἐγένετο, ἡ ἐξ ἑτέρας ὑποστάσεως ἡ οὐσίας φασκύντας εἶναι, ἡ χριστὸν, ἡ τρεῖς ἑσθαι, ἡ ἀλλοιωτὸν τοῦ υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ, τούτους ἀναθεματίζει ἡ καθολικὴ καὶ ἀποστολικὴ ἐκκλησία. The second clause is thus translated by the church of England, in that creed which they call the Nicene Creed, and which forms part of the communion service. "And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made," &c. &c. The anathematizing clause is not adopted by the church of England.

‡ Bull, D. F. N. 28.

There is a circumstance respecting the ancient use of the word *ὁμοούσιος*, which it is proper to state, because it creates some embarrassment, and has been the subject of satire and ridicule. This word, which the council of Nice introduced into their creed, had been prohibited by a council which met sixty years before at Antioch; and this inconsistency between two early councils has been stated in a light very unfavourable to the uniformity of the Christian faith. But the true account of the matter appears to be this. At the time of the council at Antioch, the controversy was with the Sabellians, who denied the distinction of persons between the Father and the Son. The Sabellians, employing every method to fix an odium upon the doctrine generally held concerning the Son, represented the word *ὁμοούσιος*, which Christians often used, as implying that there was a substance anterior to the Father and the Son, of which each received a part. The council of Antioch judged that the easiest way of repelling this attack of the Sabellians, was by laying aside the use of *ὁμοούσιος*; and although they did not mean to acknowledge that those who had used the word held the doctrine said by the Sabellians to be couched under it, they effectually disowned that doctrine, by recommending that other terms should be employed for expressing the Catholic opinion. At the time of the Council of Nice, Sabellianism was less an object of attention. The impossibility of reconciling that system with the language of Scripture had been completely exposed; the sense of the church with regard to the distinction of the Father and the Son had been precisely expressed; there was little danger of any misapprehension of terms upon this subject; and a new adversary, who held opinions directly opposite to those of Sabellius, but whose system was conceived to be not less inconsistent with Scripture, by agreeing with the church in the expression which had been introduced into former creeds concerning the Son, seemed to demand some unequivocal declaration of the common faith. The council of Nice, therefore, whose faith we have the best reason for thinking was the same with that of the council of Antioch, revived the word *ὁμοούσιος*, not in the Sabellian sense, upon account of which the council of Antioch had laid it aside, but in the sense in which it had been used by more ancient writers, and in which it was perfectly agreeable to the general train of their doctrine; and the reason of the council's adopting this particular phrase was this, that no other could be found so diametrically opposite to the Arian system. For although the Arians might call Jesus God, meaning that he was constituted God, and might say that he was begotten of the Father, meaning by begotten created, yet as they held that he was made *ἐξ οὐκ οὐτῶν*, they could not say that he was *ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας πατρός*; and as they said that he was *ἐκ τῆς ἑτέρας οὐδίας*, being a creature in respect of the Creator, they could not say that he was *ὁμοούσιος*. Eusebius, the patron of the Arians, declared in a letter to the council of Nice, that this word was incompatible with their tenets; and for this very reason we are told it was adopted by the council, that according to an expression of Ambrose, which has been often quoted, "with the sword which the heresy itself had drawn from the scabbard, they might cut off the head of the monster."

Whether it would have been more prudent to have avoided a term which a great body of Christians declared they could not use, and to

have introduced into the creed only those general Scripture phrases in which the Arians were ready to join with the Catholics, is a point to be decided by some of the general principles of church government. At present, in explaining the terms that have been introduced into the controversy concerning the Trinity, we have only to observe, that an aversion to the word ὁμοούσιος is the mark which distinguishes all those who hold any modification of the Arian system. Some of the followers of Arius, wishing to avoid the harshness of calling so exalted a Being a creature, said that the Son was different from all other creatures, but still they were obliged by their principles to say that he was ἀνομοίος τῷ πατρὶ. Others who received the name Semi-Arians, substituted ὁμοιούσιος in place of ὁμοούσιος, *i. e.* they admitted that the Son was not only unlike all other creatures, but that he was like the Father, having this peculiar privilege granted to him, to have a substance in all things similar to that of God. The Semi-Arians spoke in the highest terms of the dignity of the Son; and it was not easy for those who approached so near to one another as the Catholics and they did, to preserve, upon an incomprehensible subject, a marked difference in their writings. But the Semi-Arians never admitted the word ὁμοούσιος into their creeds, because it implied more than they believed. They believed that the Father had granted to the Son a similarity to himself; but ὁμοούσιος implies that there is an essential sameness of nature between them.

We are thus led, by the explication of this discriminating term, to what I called the third or Catholic system of the Trinity, which may be shortly expressed in words of common use with the Ancient Church, *μία οὐσία καὶ τρεῖς ὑποστάσεις*, or, *εἰς Θεὸς ἐν τρεῖσι ὑποστάσεσι*.

SECTION III.

THE ecclesiastical sense of the word ὑπόστασις was not perfectly ascertained in the beginning of the fourth century. By some it was considered as denoting the being or subsistence of a thing, and so as equivalent to οὐσία: by others it was understood to mean that which has a subsistence, the thing subsisting, a person. It appears to be used in the first sense by the council of Nice, when in one part of the anathematizing clause they condemn those who said that the Son ἐξ ἑτέρας οὐσίας ἢ ὑποστάσεως ἐστίν; and according to this sense the council of Sardis, in the fourth century, declared *μὴν εἶναι ὑποστάσιν τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ, καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος*. Had the council meant by ὑπόστασις, a person, their decree would have been pure Sabellianism. Some alarm was spread through the church when the decree was first published, from an apprehension that this might be the meaning of it. But when the matter came to be investigated, it was found that, as the council of Sardis understood ὑπόστασις in the first sense, and those, who said *τρεῖς εἶναι ὑποστάσεις*, understood it in the second, the meaning of both was precisely the same; and after this explication, it was generally understood that οὐσία should denote the being or essence of a thing, ὑπόστασις the person subsisting. In this sense the last word had been used by the Platonic school and by many of the Christian writers, before the

council of Nice. It is explained in the ancient Greek lexicons by *πρόσωπον*, and it was rendered by the Latins *persona*, a living intelligent agent.

The third system, then, was distinguished from Sabellianism, by admitting *τρεις ἰποστάσεις*; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, instead of being considered as one person manifesting himself in various ways, were stated as three persons, each of whom has a permanent distinct subsistence. It was distinguished from Arianism by ascribing to all the three persons *μία οὐσία*. And as Athanasius speaks, *το μερ φύσιν δῆλοι τῆς θεότητος το δε τας των τριων ιδιοτητα*. Those who held this system would not, with the Arians, call the Son and the Holy Ghost *ἑτεροουσι*, because this conveyed the idea of separation and inferiority, such an essential difference, as there is between the nature of the creature and that of the Creator. Neither did they adopt the words *ταυτουουσι* and *μοιουουσι*, because these might seem to favour the Sabellian confusion of persons. But they said the three persons were *ὁμοουσι*, of one substance. Jesus Christ, said the council of Chalcedon, is *ὁμοουσιος ἡμιν κατὰ τὴν ἀνθρώπινην, καὶ ὁμοουσιος πατρὶ κατὰ τὴν θεότητα*: an expression which leads us to conceive the meaning of the church in those days to have been, that as all men partake of the same human nature, so the divine nature was common to three persons.

But it will occur to you that three persons having a distinct subsistence, and having the same divine nature, are in reality three Gods; that the most perfect agreement in purpose, and the most invariable consent in operation, do by no means correspond to that unity of God, which is a first principle of natural religion; and that if those who held the third opinion had reason to accuse the Arians of Paganism and idolatry for worshipping a supreme and an inferior God, the Arians had reason to accuse them in turn of polytheism for believing in three Gods. Accordingly, the names which Mr. Gibbon gives to the three distinct systems concerning the nature of the Divine Trinity, which he professes to delineate in the second volume of his History, are these, Arianism, Tritheism, Sabellianism; and the charge which is commonly brought against Athanasians, the name given to those who hold the third or Catholic opinion, is that they are tritheists. It is certain, however, that Athanasius and his followers uniformly disclaimed tritheism,—and that while they asserted the equality of the Son and the Holy Ghost with the Father, by saying that the divine nature was common to all the three, they maintained, at the same time, that the three persons were united in a manner perfectly different from that union which subsists amongst individuals of the same species. In order, therefore, to do justice to the Catholic system, it is necessary to state the manner in which those who hold this system endeavoured to reconcile the divine unity with the subsistence of the three persons. What I have read of their writings upon this subject, appears to me reducible to two heads. 1. That the Father is, in their language, the fountain of deity, *πηγὴ θεότητος*. They called the Father *αρχή*, not in the common sense of that word, the beginning, as if the Father existed before the Son and the Holy Ghost, but in the

1. The Father is the fountain of deity, *πηγὴ θεότητος*. They called the Father *αρχή*, not in the common sense of that word, the beginning, as if the Father existed before the Son and the Holy Ghost, but in the

philosophical sense of the word, the principle from which another arises. In this sense he was called *αρχος*—*αγεννητος*—*αιτια νιον*. It was said to be implied in the very name of Father that he was *αιτια και αρχη του εξ αυτου γεννηθεντος*; and the difference of the three persons was conceived to consist in this, that the Father was *αυαιτος*; and that both the Son and the Holy Ghost were *αιτιατοι*.

Upon this principle the ancient Catholics grounded the Unity of God. They did not conceive that there were three unoriginated beings, but that there was *μια αρχη δεοτητος*, and that the Father, by being the *αρχη*, is the *εωςς*. God, they said, is one because the Son and the Holy Ghost are referred *εις εν αιτιον*. On this account they held, that, although there are three Persons in the Godhead, *μοιως δεοτητος αδιαιετος*.

Different names were employed to express the manner of causation with regard to the two persons who were considered as *αιτιατοι*. It was said of the one that he was begotten, of the other that he proceeded. The generation of the one was suggested by his being called in Scripture *νιος του Θεου*—*μοιογενης παγα πατρος*. The procession of the other was suggested partly by his being called *πνευμα, α πνεω, spiro*, I send forth breath; and partly by our Lord's saying in one place, John xv. 26, *το πνευμα της αληθειας, ο παγα του πατρος εκπροσενται*. But although generation be applied to the Son, we must be sensible that the manner in which he derived his origin from the Father cannot bear any analogy to the proper meaning of the word; and that all attempts to explain the manner of this derivation must be in the highest degree presumptuous and unprofitable. The procession of the Holy Ghost is a word of more general signification, and does not convey any precise idea of the manner in which this Person is derived. It is appropriated to Him, because the Scripture nowhere says of him that he is begotten of the Father. But it is impossible for us to form a clear apprehension of the distinction between procession and generation, the two terms which are stated as the *ιδιοτητες* of the Son and the Holy Ghost; both denote the communication of the divine essence from the Father; and all the attempts of ancient and of modern writers to discriminate the modes in which the communication may be made, consist of words without meaning.

Although those who held the system of the trinity maintained the unity of the Godhead, by saying that the Son and the Holy Ghost were derived from the Father, they are not to be understood as meaning that the existence of these two Persons had a beginning, or that the Father, after existing for some time alone, brought them into being by an act of his will, and imparted to them such powers as he chose. This is the Arian creed; but it cannot be received by those who hold *τρεις υποστασεις εν μια ουσια*; for the divine nature, being incapable of change, cannot be extended to three Persons after having been peculiar to one; and if the being of two of these Persons had been precarious, communicated to them at a certain time by the will of another, both of them would want eternity and immutability, two of the essential properties of the divine nature.

The Athanasians, therefore, in consistency with the leading principles of their system, considered the Son and the Holy Ghost as having always existed with the Father; and they illustrated their meaning

by saying that as light cannot exist without effulgence, nor the sun without emitting his rays, nor the mind without reason—so the Father never existed without the Son and the Spirit.

The Son was υἱος αἰδίου αἰδίου πατρὸς—ὡν συναἰδιος καὶ τῷ Κυρίῳ πνεύματι.* And in the confession of faith of Gregory, an illustrious writer of the third century, after a description of the three Persons, it is added. *τρεῖς τῆαυτα δοξῇ, καὶ αἰδιότητι καὶ βασιλείᾳ μὴ μεριζομένη.*

The same general reasoning applies to the necessary and eternal co-existence of both the αἰτιατοὶ with the αἰτιος. But as the dignity of the person of the Son was much more an object of attention and controversy in the early ages, than that of the Spirit, most of the images, and the greatest part of the language employed on this subject refer particularly to him. One of the images, probably suggested by the Apostle John's often calling the Son *λογος*, arose from the meaning of that word. It was said by the Platonic fathers, that "God, being an eternal intelligence, from the beginning had the *λογος* in himself, being eternally rational;" and hence they often called Jesus Christ *λογος αἰδίου πατρὸς*. I shall illustrate this principle by the words of Bishop Horsley, who concurs in it with the ancient Platonists. "The personal subsistence of a divine *λογος* is implied in the very idea of a God. The argument rests on a principle which was common to all the Platonic fathers, and seems to be founded on Scripture, that the existence of the Son flows necessarily from the divine intellect exerted on itself; from the Father's contemplation of his own perfections. For as the Father ever was, his perfections have for ever been, and his intellect hath been ever active. But perfections which have ever been, the ever-active intellect must ever have contemplated; and the contemplation which hath ever been, must ever have been accompanied with its just effect, the personal existence of the Son."†

This method of illustrating the necessary co-existence of the Son with the Father, which has passed from the Platonic fathers of the second century through a succession of Athanasian writers to the present time, does certainly convey to ordinary readers an idea that the Son is merely an attribute of the Father, the reason of God; and, accordingly, Dr. Priestley and others have represented the earlier writers who called the Son *λογος*, as speaking a Sabellian language: and they say that it was to avoid the Sabellianism implied in the use of this word, that the Arians made a distinction between the *λογος*, which always was with God, *i. e.* his own reason, and the *λογος* by whom he made the world, *i. e.* the person whom he created to be the instrument of making other things. The former is *λογος εἰδωθετης*, *ratio insita*, reason. The latter is *λογος προφορετος*, *ratio prolata*, speech, reason, brought forth in words. The Son, said Arius, might be compared to the latter, in order to express that he proceeded immediately from God, but he cannot be compared to the former, which means only an attribute of the Deity. This was a distinction, by which Arius wished not only to avoid the appearance of Sabellianism, but also to evade the argument, for the necessary and eternal co-existence of the Son with the Father, drawn from his being called *λογος Θεου*. It cannot be denied that the analogy between the relation of the Father to

the *λογος*, and the relation of every man's mind to its own thoughts, which the early writers laid hold of as furnishing an argument for the eternal co-existence of the Son, was pursued too far by some of them, and that the obscurity and inconsistency which always flow from an abuse of images, was the consequence. At the same time, it is certain that the very same writers, who make the most frequent use of this image, far from conceiving the *λογος* to be an attribute of the Father, speak of the Son as a distinct person, and as eternal; it has been made probable by Bishop Bull, that, when they spoke of *λογος ενδιαθετος*, they meant a person, the offspring of the divine mind, who having been from eternity with the Father, became before the creation *λογος προφορικός*; and we know that Athanasius, probably aware of the abuse of this image, does not approve of applying either *λογος ενδιαθετος* or *λογος προφορικός* as a description of the Son, but calls him *υιος αυτοτελής*.

The distinction, which the ancient Catholic writers upon the Trinity made between *λογος ενδιαθετος* and *λογος προφορικός*, is connected with a circumstance which has contributed very much to this apparent embarrassment and contradiction in what they say of the person of the Son. The circumstance is this, that the generation of the Son has with them different meanings, according as it respects the divine nature of this person, or his exertions towards the creatures. The generation of the Son properly means the manner in which the divine essence was from all eternity communicated to him. In respect of this, he is styled in Scripture *μονογενής παρὰ πατρός*; and, in the Nicene creed, *Θεός εκ Θεου*; and, in reference to this, Athanasius says, *Θεός αεί υπαί τον υίου πατρός εστι*. But the ancients often speak of a generation of the Son which took place at a particular time, immediately before the creation of the world. By this they mean, not the beginning of his existence, but the display of his powers in the production of external objects. In reference to this, Athanasius explains the expression which Paul applies to the Son, *πρωτοτοκος πατρός κτιστός*, begotten before all creation; not that he then began to be, for he had existed as a distinct person from all eternity, but he had remained with the Father without exerting his powers upon external objects, and at the creation came forth from the Father. This, therefore, was properly named *προελευσις*—*προβολή*, *prolatio*, the projection of his energies; and the ancient writers who gave it the name of generation, never conceived that this coming forth to act was the beginning of the Son's existence. But the Arians, laying hold of this improper expression, and sheltering their opinion concerning the creation of the Son under what the ancients had said of his figurative generation, declared it to be an article of their faith, that the Son did not exist before he was begotten. The declaration appears to carry intrinsic evidence of its own truth. Yet the council of Nice condemned those who say of the Son *πρωτη γεννηθη*: *ουκ ην*; a part of the anathematizing clause, of which we could not make sense, if we did not know that the ancient writers, who say that the Son was begotten when he came forth to create, understood by this expression merely a figurative generation, not the beginning of his existence but the exertion of his powers, and that they believed that before this *προελευσις*, *ὁ λογος*, as John speaks, *ην προς τον Θεον*.

There is yet a third generation of which the ancients speak, when

“the Word was made flesh.” This generation is part of that *οικονομία* which the Scriptures reveal, and there is much better authority for applying the word generation in this sense than in the former. For the angel said to Mary, “the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee,—therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.”*

It is plain from what has been said, that neither the *προελένους* of the Son, nor his incarnation, has any connexion with the manner of his being. They were only what the ancients called *συχκαταβάσεις*, acts of condescension in a person who had a complete existence. But in this view they serve to illustrate the first principle of which we are now speaking. For, by being acts of condescension, they imply that subordination in the Son which results from the Father’s being the foundation of deity. There cannot be degrees of perfection in the godhead, a greater and a less divinity; and, if the Son be *ἐμοονσιος πατρι*, he must possess all the essential perfections of deity. But he is, in this respect, less than the Father, that he hath received them from him. He is *αυτοθεος*, a word of frequent use among the ancient writers of the Trinity, if the word be understood to mean *ipse Deus*, very God, but he is not *αυτοθεος* if the word be understood to mean *Deus a se ipso*; for, in this sense, the Father alone is *αυτοθεος*, while the Son is *θεος ex θεου*. When Jesus therefore, says, “my Father is greater than I,” although, upon the principles of the third system, he cannot mean any difference of nature, he may mean that pre-eminence of the Father which is necessarily implied in his being *αγεννητος*; a pre-eminence which does not appear to us to admit of any act of condescension in the Father, of his receiving a commission, or being appointed to hold an office; whereas there is a manifest congruity in the Son, who derived his nature from the Father, being employed to exert the perfections of the godhead in the accomplishment of a particular purpose. Hence, as our Lord speaks of the Father’s giving him a commission, of his being sent by God, of his coming to do the will of God, so those ancient writers who represent the Son as equal to the Father, speak of him at the same time as *αγγελος, υπηρετης θεου*; and the fitness of that *οικονομία*, which he undertook for the salvation of mankind, results from the essential subordination of the Son to the Father.

In like manner, the Spirit who “proceedeth from the Father” is, upon that account, subordinate to the Father. Hence, in numberless places of Scripture, he is both called the Spirit of God, and is said to be sent by the Father. But the Scriptures intimate also a subordination of the Spirit to the Son, for he is called the Spirit of Christ. Jesus says, in the discourse formerly quoted from John’s Gospel, “I will send him—He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it to you.”† It is not indeed any where said in Scripture, that the Spirit proceedeth from the Son, and, for this reason, the council of Constantinople, A.D. 381, when they condemned the errors of Macedonius, introduced amongst the exalted titles which they applied to the Spirit, this designation, taken literally from Scripture, *το εκ του πατρος εκπορευομενον*. In the fifteenth century it became a con-

* Luke i. 35.

† John xv. 26; xvi. 14.

troversy whether the Spirit, not in respect of occasional mission, for none could deny what the Scriptures say that the Spirit is sent by the Son, but, in respect of his nature, proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father. Most of the Greek Fathers, while they acknowledged the personality and divinity of the Spirit, would not adopt an expression concerning him, which appeared to them improper, because it is unscriptural, and preserved the language of the council of Constantinople, *το πνευμα ὃ ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται*. But the Latin fathers argued in this manner. Since the Spirit, who is called in Scripture the Spirit of God, is called also the Spirit of his Son; and since the Spirit, who is sent by the Father, is also said to be sent by the Son, it follows that there is the same subordination of the Spirit to the Son as to the Father. But the subordination of the Spirit to the Father is grounded upon his proceeding from the Father, and his being subordinate to the Son must have the same foundation, *i. e.* as the divine nature was communicated by the Father to the Son, so it was communicated by the Father and the Son to the Holy Ghost.

Upon the strength of this reasoning, the Latin fathers made an addition to the creed of Constantinople, and instead of simply translating the clause used in that creed, "*qui a Patre procedit*," they said, "*qui a Patre filioque procedit*." The Greek churches, who did not admit the truth of that which was added, were enraged at the presumption of the Latin churches in making an addition, upon account of their peculiar tenets, to a creed which had been composed by a general council, and had been declared to be unchangeable; and a contention for authority thus mingling itself, as has often happened in the church of Christ, with a difference of opinion, the word "*filioque*" came to be an ostensible ground of that schism between the Greek and Latin churches, which began in the eighth century, and continues till this day. The reformed churches, without vindicating the Latin church, or asserting its right to make the addition, acquiesce in the reasoning upon which its opinion was founded, and say with it that the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son.

I have now stated the full amount of the first principle, by which I said, those who hold the third or Catholic system of the Trinity, endeavour to maintain the unity of God. They do not believe in three unoriginated beings, co-ordinate and independent. But they believe in three persons, from the first of whom the second and third did, from all eternity, derive the nature and perfections of the godhead; and, upon this communication of the substance of the Father to the Son, and the substance of the Father and the Son to the Holy Ghost, they ground that gradual subordination, which, with an entire sameness of nature, constitutes the most perfect consent and co-operation of the three persons.

But after we have admitted all that is implied in this first principle, the third system of the Trinity appears to fall very short of those conceptions of the unity of God which reason and Scripture teach us to form. We must therefore take into view the second principle.

2. It may be thus expressed; the three persons are inseparably joined together. So necessary and indissoluble is this connexion, that as the Father never existed without the Son and the Spirit, so

the Son and the Spirit were not separated from him, by being produced out of his substance. Every idea of section, and division, and interval, which is suggested to us by material objects and by individuals of the same species, is to be laid aside when we raise our conceptions to that distinction of persons under which the Deity is revealed to us in the Scripture. We are to attempt to conceive that this distinction does not dissolve the continuity of nature—that while every one of the three persons has his distinct subsistence, they are never *μεμεξισμενοι η ξενοι αλληλων, αλλ' εν αλληλοις ασυγχυτως τεξεχωζονται*.

There were two phrases which the ancient Catholics employed to mark this idea. In order to show that they did not consider the Son as sent forth from the Father, as our children are sent forth to have an existence separated from their parents, they called his generation an interior, not an external production, meaning that he remained in the Father, from whom he was produced; and, in order to mark the indissoluble connexion of all the three persons, they used the word *τεξεχωζης* or *εμπεξεχωζης*, *circum-incessio*, which is thus defined, “that union by which one being exists in another, not only by a participation of nature, but by the most intimate presence with it, so that, although the two beings are distinct, they dwell in and penetrate one another.” They considered both these phrases as warranted by such expressions in Scripture as the following, John x. 38, “That ye may know and believe that the Father is in me and I in him;” and, John xiv. 10, “The Father that dwelleth in me, he doth the works.” And they considered this indwelling of the persons in one another as completing the unity of God.

If, upon this subject, they sometimes speak unintelligibly, and at other times approach to the language of Sabellianism, the apology is to be found in their own confession, that the manner of the divine existence is above the comprehension of man, and in their anxiety to reconcile a fundamental truth of natural religion with the discoveries of revelation.

I cannot better illustrate the third or Catholic system which I have now delineated, than by giving an account of what is called the Platonic Trinity. I do not mean the Trinity held by Plato himself; for, although it has been said that this philosopher anticipated the revelation of three persons in the godhead, and that his philosophy prepared the world for receiving this incomprehensible truth, yet the passages relating to this subject, which I either found in his works, when I read them, or which I have, since that time, seen extracted from him, are so few in number, so short, and so obscure, that it seems to me impossible for any person, who had not much previous knowledge of the subject, to draw that conclusion from them, which they have sometimes been brought to establish. It has been said indeed that the Trinity of persons in the Deity was a secret doctrine of Plato, which, although couched in his writings under dark words, was plainly taught to those disciples who were able to receive it. I know not upon what evidence this is said; but supposing it to be true, it must be allowed that this secret doctrine was not published to the world till the second or third century of the Christian era, when the Platonic school, following out the sublime views of the divine nature given by their master, which in some points corresponded with the Christian revela-

tion, and themselves enlightened by acquaintance with the gospel, which they could not fail to acquire while it was spreading over the Roman empire, and was embraced by many Platonists, brought forward in the language of Plato a scheme very much resembling what I called the third system of the Trinity.

The following is a short view of this scheme, in the words of Bishop Horsley, who writes like one deeply read in ancient philosophy, and whose acknowledged eminence as a man of science procures credit for his account of the opinions of other men. Dr. Priestley having asserted in one of his publications, that it was never imagined that the three component members of the Platonic Trinity were either equal to each other, or were, strictly speaking, one, his zealous and able antagonist ascribes this assertion to an ignorance of the true principles of Platonism, and opposes to it the following account of these principles, which I gather from different parts of his 13th letter to Dr. Priestley. The three principles in the Deity are *το αγαθον*, goodness, *νοϋς*, intelligence, *ψυχη*, vitality. These three, strictly speaking, are more one, than any thing in nature of which unity may be predicted. No one of them can be supposed without the other two. The second and third being, the first is necessarily supposed; and the first being, the second and third must come forth. All the three were included by the Platonists in the divine nature, the *το θειον*; a notion implying the same equality which the Christian Fathers maintained. To the first principle they ascribed an activity of a very peculiar kind—such as might be consistent with an undisturbed immutability. He acts *μενων εν εαυτου ηθει*, by a simple indivisible unvaried energy; which, as it cannot be broken into a multitude of distinct acts, cannot be adapted to the variety of external things; on which, therefore, the first God acts not, either to create or to preserve them, otherwise than through the two subordinate principles. But eternal activity was supposed to be the consequence of the goodness of the Deity; and from this eternal activity flowed, by necessary consequence, the existence of intellect, and the vital principle, in which alone the divine nature is active upon external things. According to this system too the world was supposed to be eternal, because it was conceived that the goodness of the Deity could not suffer that to be delayed which, because he hath done it, appears fit to be done. But the world was supposed to be eternal, not by its own nature, but by the choice of a free agent who might have willed the contrary; whereas intellect and the vital principle have been eternal by necessity, as branches of the divinity; and therefore, when the converted Platonists, upon the authority of revelation, discarded the notion of the world's eternity, they did not find themselves obliged to discard with it the eternity of the *νοϋς*, which they considered as equivalent to the Christian *λογος*, because that was an eternity of quite another kind.

Such is the view of the Platonic Trinity given by Dr. Horsley; and in perfect conformity to this is the confession of his faith in the Christian Trinity, which his 13th and 15th letters to Dr. Priestley contain, and which form the most useful recapitulation that I can give of what has been said upon the Catholic system. "I hold," says Dr. Horsley, "that the Father's faculties are not exerted on external things, otherwise than through the Son and the Holy Ghost; that the Scrip-

tures, by discovering a trinity, teach clearly that the metaphysical unity of the divine nature is not an unity of persons, but that they do not teach such a separation and independence of these persons as amounts to tritheism. I maintain that the three persons are one being—one by mutual relation, indissoluble connexion, and gradual subordination; so strictly one, that any individual thing in the whole world of matter and of spirit presents but a faint shadow of their unity. I maintain that each person by himself is God, because each possesses fully every attribute of the divine nature. But I maintain that these three Persons are all included in the very idea of God. I maintain the equality of the three Persons in all the attributes of the divine nature, and their equality in rank and authority with respect to all created things, whatever relations or differences may subsist between themselves. Differences there must be, lest we confound the persons, which was the error of Sabellius. But the differences can only consist in the personal properties, lest we divide the substance, and make a plurality of independent gods.”

SECTION IV.

THE third or Catholic system of the Trinity is the declared faith of both the established churches of Great Britain. The first of the thirty-nine articles of the church of England contains this clause: “And in the unity of this Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.” And the creed called the Creed of Athanasius, because it delivers with great fulness of expression that doctrine of which he was the distinguished champion, is appointed to be read upon certain days, as the most explicit declaration that the Church of England is equally removed from the Sabellian and the Arian systems. The words in the second chapter of our Confession of Faith are nearly the same with those of the first article of the Church of England. “In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.” And this doctrine is accounted by our church so essential, that it is introduced into the catechism which they recommend for the instruction of young persons in the principles of the Christian religion.

In Scotland there were few publications during the course of the last century that particularly respected the doctrine of the Trinity: and in most parts of the country the minds of the great body of the people, from the force of early instruction, acquiesce, perhaps without much speculation or inquiry, in the Catholic system. But in England many writers, since the beginning of the last century, have drawn a large share of the public attention, and have produced a considerable degree of agitation in the minds of Christians, by the theories which they have offered, in order to reconcile the trinity of persons with the unity of the Godhead. A particular account of these theories would

lead into a very perplexed and tedious detail, and is in reality of no use, because all of them approach to one or other of the three systems that have been mentioned. By assuming a new name they may seem to keep clear of the objections that have been urged against their parent system; but when they are narrowly canvassed, they are always found to be resolvable into the same principles, and they must be tried upon the same grounds.

Although for these reasons I shall not recite the names of all who have held some particular opinion about the Trinity, or attempt to discriminate their tenets, there is one exception which I cannot avoid making. Dr. Samuel Clarke is so deservedly held in high estimation for his abilities as a general scholar, and for the excellence and usefulness both of his sermons and of his discourses on the evidence of natural and revealed religion; his theory of the Trinity is a work executed with such labour and skill, and the controversy to which it gave occasion was carried on with such eagerness at the time, and is still referred to in so many theological treatises, that there would be an essential defect in this view of opinions concerning the Trinity, if no particular notice were taken of his system.

Dr. Clarke has entitled his book, *The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*. The first part is a collection and explication of all the texts in the New Testament relating to the doctrine of the Trinity. The collection is a complete and a fair one; his explication of some of the texts does not agree with the interpretation most generally received; but he defends his criticisms like a scholar and an acute reasoner; and upon this collection of texts and his explication of them, is founded the second part, in which what he accounts the true doctrine of the Trinity is set forth at large in fifty-five distinct propositions. He accompanies these propositions with references to the particular texts which support them, and often both with illustrations of his own, and with citations from ancient and modern writers; his object being to show that the doctrine which he professes to ground upon the Scriptures is also agreeable to the sentiments of the succession of ecclesiastical writers. It has been said that there is not the same fairness in his citations, as in the collection of texts. He not only omits those passages which are unfavourable to his own opinion, but he often leaves out parts of the sentences which he quotes, and he gives them in so detached a form, that they sometimes appear to speak a meaning perfectly different from that which a reader, who has an opportunity of comparing them with the context, perceives to be the sense of the author. His book, therefore, is by no means a safe guide to those who wish to be instructed in the sentiments of the ancient church with regard to the Trinity. But to those who have derived that knowledge from other less exceptionable authority, or who read his book merely from a desire to know what Dr. Clarke himself thought, it presents the following consistent and intelligible scheme, which I give as the amount of the fifty-five propositions that constitute the second part of his book.

There is one living intelligent agent, or person, who alone is self-existent, the author of all being and the origin of all power, who is supreme over all. With this first Supreme Cause and Father of all, there has existed from the beginning a second divine person, who is

his Word or Son, and a third divine person, who is his Spirit; and these three are distinguished in Scripture by their personal characters. When the Scriptures mention the one God, the only God, or God by way of eminence, they always mean the Person of the Father. The Son derived his being and all his attributes from the Father, and therefore he is not the self-existent substance. But as the Scriptures have not declared the metaphysical manner of this derivation, they are worthy of censure who affirm that the Son was made out of nothing; and, as the Scriptures never make any limitation of time in declaring the Son's derivation from the Father, they are also worthy of censure who say that there was a time when the Son was not. The Son derived his being from the Father, not by mere necessity of nature, but by an act of the Father's incomprehensible power and will. In like manner, the Spirit, without any limitation of time, derived his being from the Father. The Son is sometimes called God, not on account of his metaphysical nature, how divine soever, but on account of his relative attributes and divine authority communicated to him from the Father over us. To the Son are ascribed all communicable divine powers, *i. e.* all powers which include not the independence and supreme authority by which the God and Father of all is distinguished; for, in this, the Son is evidently subordinate to the Father, that he derived his being, attributes, and power from the Father. Every action of the Son is only the exercise of the Father's power communicated to him, and the reason why the Scriptures, although they style the Father God, and also style the Son God, yet at the same time always declare there is but one God, is, because there being in the monarchy of the universe but one authority, original in the Father, derivative in the Son, therefore the one God, absolutely speaking, always signifies him in whom the power and authority is original and underived. In like manner, the Holy Spirit, whatever his metaphysical nature be, and whatever divine power or dignity be ascribed to him, is evidently subordinate to the Father; and, in Scripture, he is also represented as subordinate to the Son, both by nature and by the will of the Father. And thus all authority and power is original in the Father, and from him derived to the Son, and exercised according to the will of the Father, by the operation of the Son, and by the influences of the Spirit.

This system was regarded at its first appearance as heretical. A prosecution was commenced against the author by the lower house of Convocation in England; and he was attacked by many divines, at the head of whom is Dr. Waterland. After reading a great part of what has been written by Dr. Clarke and his antagonists, it appears to me that the difference between them may be stated within a narrow compass. Dr. Clarke avoids the most offensive expressions used by the Arians. Instead of calling Christ a creature, or limiting the beginning of his existence, he says "that the Son was eternally begotten by the will of the Father." But the word eternally in this sentence means nothing more than that the Son was begotten before all ages, before those measures of time which the succession of created objects furnishes, in the incomprehensible duration of the Father's eternity; and the phrase "by the will of the Father," implies that the Father might not have produced the Son, or that he might have

produced him at any other time as well as at the time when he did ; so that however great the powers are which the Father hath been pleased to communicate to the Son, he is not essentially God, but there are, in the manner of his existence, a mutability and a dependence inconsistent with our ideas of the Divine Nature. The opinion of Dr. Clarke, therefore, is in reality that of Semi-Arians, who were called Homoiousians, because they exalted Christ above the rank of creatures, and held that, not by necessity of nature, but by special privilege, he was like to God. On the other hand, according to the third system, eternity in its proper sense, and necessary existence, are ascribed to the Son. All the attributes of the Godhead are conceived to belong to him by nature, and it is not supposed possible that he could be other than that which he is. Dr. Clarke and his opponents agree that the Son is not self-existent ; for both account the Father the fountain of deity. But Dr. Clarke thinks, that, since the Son is not self-existent, he does not exist necessarily, while his opponents affirm, that, with the consent of the Father, and according to his will yet by necessity of nature, the Son derived his being from the Father. Dr. Clarke and his opponents agree that the Son is subordinate to the Father ; but the subordination of Dr. Clarke implies an essential inferiority of nature, while his opponents do not admit of any difference in point of duration or dignity, and understand the word subordination as respecting merely order. Dr. Clarke and his opponents agree that the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are three distinct persons, to every one of whom the name God is applied : but Dr. Clarke considers that name as belonging in its highest sense to the Father, and only in an inferior sense to the other two, and thus maintains the unity of the Godhead upon the same principle with the Arian system, while his opponents, making no distinction between the word of God when applied in Scripture to the Father, and the same word when applied in Scripture to the Son, and inferring, from the language of Scripture, that it may also be applied to the Spirit, have recourse to the principles which were stated under the third system, for maintaining the unity of three persons, each of whom is truly God.

In stating this unity, the opponents of Dr. Clarke adhered to the word which had been used by the council of Nice, saying that the three persons were *ὁμοουσιου*, con-substantial, which is rendered, both in the English Articles, and in our Confession of Faith, “of one substance.” It did not escape the acuteness of Dr. Clarke, that the phrase is ambiguous. “One substance” may mean one numerical substance, *i. e.* a substance which is one in number, individual ; or one generical substance, *i. e.* the same in kind, that which belongs to all of one kind, as Aristotle said all the stars are *ὁμοουσια*. On account of this ambiguity Dr. Clarke required his opponents to declare in what sense they understood the word ; and by a succession of writers, who followed his steps, and wished to expose the third system as untenable, the following dilemma is often stated. “If you mean, by con-substantial, that the three persons are of the same individual substance, you destroy their personality ; for three persons, of whom each has not his own distinct substance, but who are in one substance, are only different modifications or manners of being, so that your Trinity becomes nominal and ideal, and in your zeal for the unity of the godhead, you

recur to Sabellianism. If, on the other hand, you mean by con-substantial, that the three persons are of the same generical substance, then you destroy their unity ; for three persons, having the same substance in kind, have each of them his own substance, and are, in reality, three beings."

This dilemma, like many others which appear to be inextricable, is merely captious. For the ancients, who seem to have understood *ὁμοουσιος*, as marking a generical identity of substance, declare that they consider the three persons as not separated from one another like three individuals of the same species, but as united in a manner more perfect than we are able to conceive ; and the moderns, many of whom seem to understand con-substantial as marking a numerical identity of substance, declare that they consider each of the three persons as having a distinct subsistence, and the divine substance as in this respect essentially distinguished from every thing material, that without diminution or division it extends to three persons. The difficulty, therefore, arising from the ambiguity of the word con-substantial, with which those who hold the Catholic system have been so often pressed, is only a proof that it is a vain attempt to apply the terms of human science to the manner of the divine existence, and that the multiplication of words upon this subject does not in any degree increase the stock of our ideas.

We are thus brought back, after reviewing a multiplicity of opinions, to the few simple positions which constitute the whole amount of the knowledge that Scripture has given us concerning the Trinity, and which may be thus briefly stated. The Scriptures, while they declare the fundamental truth of natural religion, that God is one, reveal two persons, each of whom, with the Father, we are led to consider as God, and ascribe to all the three distinct personal properties. It is impossible that the three can be one in the same sense in which they are three : and therefore it follows, by necessary inference, that the unity of God is not an unity of persons ; but it does not follow that it may not be an unity of a more intimate kind than any which we behold. An unity of consent and will neither corresponds to the conclusions of reason, nor is by any means adequate to a great part of the language of Scripture, for both concur in leading us to suppose an unity of nature. Whether the substance common to the three persons be specifically or numerically the same, is a question, the discussion of which cannot advance our knowledge, because neither of the terms is applicable to the subject ; and, after all our researches and reading, we shall find ourselves just where we began, incapable of perceiving the manner in which the three persons partake of the same divine nature. But we are very shallow philosophers indeed, if we consider this as any reason for believing that they do not partake of it ; for we are by much too ignorant of the manner of the divine existence to be warranted to say that the distinction of persons is an infringement of the Divine unity. "It is strange boldness in men," says Bishop Stillingfleet, (iii. 352,) "to talk of contradictions in things above their reach. Hath not God revealed to us that he created all things ; and is it not reasonable for us to believe this, unless we are able to comprehend the manner of doing it ? Hath not God plainly revealed that there shall be a resurrection of the

dead? And must we think it unreasonable to believe it, till we are able to comprehend all the changes of the particles of matter from the creation to the general resurrection? If nothing is to be believed but what may be comprehended, the very being of God must be rejected, and all his unsearchable perfections. If we believe the attributes of God to be infinite, how can we comprehend them? We are strangely puzzled in plain, ordinary, finite things; but it is madness to pretend to comprehend what is infinite; and yet, if the perfections of God be not infinite, they cannot belong to him. Let those who presume to say that there is a contradiction in the Trinity, try their imaginations about God's eternity, not merely how he should be from himself, but how God should co-exist with all the differences of times, and yet there be no succession in his own being; and they will perhaps concur with me in thinking that there is no greater difficulty in the conception of the Trinity than there is of eternity. For three to be one is a contradiction in numbers; but whether an infinite nature can communicate itself to three different substances, without such a division as is among created beings, must not be determined by bare numbers, but by the absolute perfections of the divine nature: which must be owned to be above our comprehension."

Since then the Scriptures teach that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one, and since the unity of three persons who partake of the same divine nature must of necessity be an unity of the most perfect kind, we may rest assured that the more we can abstract from every idea of inequality, division, and separation, provided we preserve the distinction of persons, our conceptions approach the nearer to the truth. But since the manner of the Divine existence is confessedly above our comprehension, and since no words or images that we can employ are found to correspond to the unity of these three persons, there are two inferences or advices that present themselves upon this subject, which I shall just mention in taking leave of it.

The first inference is, that men of speculation ought to exercise mutual forbearance if they differ from one another in their attempts to explain that which all acknowledge to be inexplicable. It is vain to think of confining the human mind to those researches in which she may easily attain some certain conclusion. She loves to soar and to roam, and she gathers much wisdom from her own most adventurous flights; but this lesson surely should not be one of the last, that those who presume to expatiate in the sublime regions where the light of human science becomes dim and uncertain, need not be surprised to meet with many wanderers. Every sober inquirer who finds that, after all his investigations, the union of the three persons in the Godhead remains to him involved in impenetrable darkness, will judge with candour of the attempts made by other men to obtain a solution of the difficulties which presented themselves to their minds; and he will not readily suppose that they doubt of the fact, although they may differ from him in the manner of explaining the fact.

The second inference or advice is, that as you cannot expect to give the body of the people clear ideas of the manner in which the three persons are united, it may be better in discoursing to them, to avoid any particular discussion of this subject; and to follow here, as in every other instance, the pattern of teaching set in the New Testa-

ment. Our Lord and his Apostles do not propose any metaphysical explication of the unity of the Divine nature. But they assume it, and declare it as a fundamental truth; and they never insinuate that it is in the smallest degree infringed by the revelation which they give of the three persons. After this example, I advise you never to perplex the minds of the people with different theories of the Trinity, and never to suggest that the unity of the Divine nature is a questionable point; but without professing to explain how the three persons are united, to place before your hearers, as you have occasion, the Scripture account of the Son and the Holy Ghost, as well as of the Father, and thus to preserve upon their minds what the Scriptures have revealed, and what upon that account it is certainly of importance for them to learn, the dignity of the second and third persons, their relation to us, and their power to execute the gracious offices necessary for our salvation. These essential points of Christian instruction, which it is the duty of the ministers of the gospel to impress upon the people, are revealed in the Scriptures in such a manner as to be in no danger of leading into the Sabellian, the Arian, or the Tritheistic scheme of the Trinity; and, therefore, if we adhere, as we ought always to do, to the pure revelation of Scripture in our account of the three persons, we have no occasion to expose to the people the defects of these schemes; and we may reserve to ourselves all the speculations about the manner in which the three persons are united.

I conclude this specimen of the variety of opinions, and of the kind of language which you may expect to find in ancient and modern writers upon the Trinity, with mentioning the books from which I have derived most assistance.

The best writer in defence of the Catholic system of the Trinity is Bishop Bull. His works are published in a large folio volume, more than half of which is filled with the three following treatises: *Defensio fidei Nicenæ*—*Judicium Ecclesiæ Catholicæ*—*Primitiva et Apostolica Traditio*. All the three respect the Trinity, and are often quoted by succeeding writers, who borrow the greatest part of their matter from this very learned and able divine. His principal work is, *Defensio fidei Nicenæ*, which consists of four parts. 1. The *πρὸ ἰπαρχίης*, pre-existence of the Son—2. *το ὁμοούσιον*, consubstantiality of the Son—3. *το αἰεταὶ διόν*, his eternal co-existence with the Father. 4. His subordination to the Father. Bishop Pearson, in his *Exposition of the Creed*, gives the same view of the Trinity with Bishop Bull; which is the true Athanasian scheme; and he states it as he states every other point in theology of which he treats, with clearness, with sound judgment, and with much learning. Dr. Cudworth, in that magazine of learning, which he calls the *Intellectual System*, gives a full view of the Christian and the Platonic Trinity. If you consult, when you read him, the ingenious and learned notes which Mosheim has added to his Latin edition of Cudworth, you will be preserved from some errors, and your views of the subjects treated will be much enlightened and improved. When you come down to the last century, Dr. Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* is the first book which will engage your attention. As a collection of texts upon the subject it is most useful; as a view of the opinions of the ancient church it is to be read, for the reasons which I mentioned, with suspicion; and as the argu-

ment of a very able and acute man, upon a subject which seems to have been near his heart, it is proper that you should read at the same time what was said by his opponents. There are two books by Dr. Waterland. The one, *Sermons in Defence of the Divinity of Jesus Christ*; the other, *A Vindication of Christ's Divinity*. And there is an excellent book, not so controversial as Dr. Waterland's, which should be read by every student of divinity. *A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, by Dr. Thomas Randolph. Dr. Randolph opposes the principles of Dr. Clarke. But he writes directly in answer to a small book entitled, *An Essay on Spirit*, which presents a modification of the Arian System. You will read with pleasure a rational intelligible history of Arianism, which Dr. Jortin, who is very far from having any prejudice in favour of the Catholic system, gives in the third volume of his *Remarks on Ecclesiastical History*. I referred formerly to Ben Mordecai's *Apology* by Taylor. You will find many able attacks upon all the parts of the Catholic system, in the works of Mr. Thomas Emlyn.—Mosheim, in his valuable work, *De Rebus Christianorum ante Christianum Magnum*, gives the most complete information as to Sabellianism, and the other early systems of the Trinity; and his *Church History* joins to a short account of all the variety of opinions upon this subject, references to the authors who have treated of them more largely. Mr. Gibbon has introduced into his second volume a history of the Arian controversy, in which he professes to delineate the three systems of the Trinity. But there is the same inveterate prejudice against religion, and the same constant endeavour to turn into ridicule every branch of that subject, which disgrace so large a portion of the writings of this illustrious historian. Some of the books which I have mentioned will prepare you for reading this part of Gibbon, by enabling you to discern where his account is lame, or unfair. Lardner, Priestley, Lindsey, and the other Socinians of later times, incline to the Sabellian system, and employ every art to represent the other two as contrary to Scripture, to reason, and to the opinions of the primitive church. They have been attacked by many modern writers. But you will need no other antidote to their heresy than the volume of tracts by Bishop Horsley, a formidable antagonist, whose superiority in argument and in learning gives him some title to use that tone of disdain which pervades the volume. It consists of a charge to the clergy of his Archdeaconry, exposing the errors in one of Dr. Priestley's publications; of letters to Dr. Priestley, occasioned by his reply to the charge; of a sermon on the incarnation, and of supplemental disquisitions.

Of other writers who have published particular schemes of the Trinity, I am almost entirely ignorant. From the short accounts of their works which have come in my way, I found that their schemes are only certain modifications of the first or the third systems, by which ingenious men have attempted to satisfy their own minds, or to remove the objections which others had made; and knowing well that, after all our researches, difficulties must remain, and that these difficulties furnish no argument against the truth, I thought that my time might be employed more profitably than by labouring to fix in my mind their nice discriminations, which it might be difficult to apprehend and impossible to retain.

BOOK IV.

OPINIONS CONCERNING THE NATURE, THE EXTENT, AND THE APPLICATION OF THE REMEDY BROUGHT BY THE GOSPEL.

HAVING given a view of the different opinions which have been held concerning the two persons; who are revealed in the gospel, I come now to treat of the remedy which was brought by the one of these persons, and is applied by the other. It appears to me that the best method in which I can state the most important questions in theology upon this great division of the subject, is by leading you to attend to the opinions which have been held concerning the Nature—the Extent—and the Application of the remedy. By considering these three points in succession, we shall exhaust the remaining part of the Socinian, together with the Pelagian and Arminian controversies, and shall thus obtain, without more repetition than is unavoidable upon subjects so closely allied, a complete and connected view of the capital branches of controversial divinity.

CHAPTER I.

DISEASE FOR WHICH THE REMEDY IS PROVIDED.

THE gospel proceeds upon the supposition that all have sinned. It assumes the character of the religion of sinners, and professes to bring a remedy for the moral evil which exists in the world. Our attention is thus called back from the remedy to the disease; for we cannot entertain just apprehensions of the nature of that provision which the gospel has made, unless we understand the circumstances which called for that provision; and we may expect that those, who have formed different systems with regard to the nature of the remedy, are not of the same opinion with regard to the disease. In one point

however, all sects of Christians agree, that there is much sin in the world. The Socinian does not hesitate to say with the Calvinist, that all have sinned ; and those fanatics who conceived that they themselves had attained the perfection of virtue, were led, by this self-conceit, to magnify the wickedness of the rest of mankind.

That men are sinners, is a point concerning which those who respect the authority of Scripture cannot entertain any doubt ; for it is uniformly taught there, from the period preceding the flood, when, as we read, “ God saw that the wickedness of man was great.”* At the appearance of Christianity, the angel gave to the son of Mary the name of Jesus, “ for he shall save his people from their sins.”† Jesus himself said, “ they that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick ;”‡ and Paul, the apostle of Jesus, in his Epistle to the Romans, builds his whole doctrine upon the position which he proves in the commencement, “ that both Jews and Gentiles are under sin, and that the whole world is guilty before God.”§ But this position does not rest entirely upon the authority of Scripture. It is abundantly established by the experience of all ages ; and they who never received the revelation of the gospel, agree with Christians in acknowledging the fact upon which that revelation proceeds. The violence of human passions, the inefficacy of all the attempts which have been made since the beginning of legislation to restrain them, the secret wickedness which abounds, the horrors of remorse which rack the minds of some, the self-reproach of which those who are less guilty cannot divest themselves, and the dissatisfaction with their own attainments, which the most virtuous feel—these circumstances conspire in affording the clearest evidence, that men do not act up to the dictates of right reason, but that the conduct of all falls short, in one degree or other, of that standard which they perceive it to be both their duty and their interest to follow. Men will differ in their opinion of the grossness and the extent of the corruption of manners, according to the opportunities which they have had of observing it—according to the degree of severity in their natural disposition—according to the sentiments and principles which they had imbibed during their education, or which the reflections and habits of advanced life have formed ; but no difference in character or situation can render men wholly insensible to this corruption. Even those, who plead upon system for an indulgence to their own defects, meet with numberless instances where they cannot allow others to plead the same indulgence. The vices of one rank are regarded with contempt or with indignation by another ; and the easy accommodating moralist, who resolves the vices of the age into the progress of society, looks back with horror upon the enormities of former times. It is true that the forms of wickedness vary according to the state of society ; it is also true that some forms are marked with deeper depravity than others ; and it will not be denied by any scholar, that a concurrence of favourable circumstances has at some periods gone far to mitigate the atrocity of crimes, and to invigorate the exertions of virtue. But it is in the writings of the poets, not of the historians of antiquity, that a golden

* Gen. vi. 5.

† Mat. ix. 12.

‡ Mat. i. 21.

§ Rom. iii. 9.

age is to be found. The authentic records of the civil and political transactions of man, from the earliest times, are full of the effects of his wickedness; no date is fixed in these records for the first introduction of sin into the world; and all our information with regard to this most important era in chronology is derived from Scripture.

SECTION I.

It is well known that in the third chapter of the book of Genesis the first act of disobedience is related, and that the history of this act is connected with a command and a threatening, which had been mentioned in the second chapter. This interesting history demands our particular attention, when we are beginning to speak of that state of moral evil for which the gospel brings a remedy; and in order to prepare you for the information which it conveys, it may be proper to mention two extremes, which are to be avoided in the interpretation of this chapter.

1. Several parts of the history cannot be understood in a literal sense. Thus it is not to be supposed that the tree, of which man was forbidden to eat, had the power which the name seems to imply, and which the serpent suggests, of making those who ate the fruit of it wise, knowing good and evil; neither is it to be supposed that the serpent at that time possessed those powers of speech and reason which the narration seems to ascribe to him, or that the plain meaning of these words, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent," expresses the whole punishment of the tempter.—Several writers, indeed, who are disposed to turn the Scriptures into ridicule, have stated what they call the absurdity or the frivolousness of the literal sense, as a reason for rejecting both the narration and the books in which it is contained. But it has been well answered, that the narration bears upon the face of it the marks of that symbolical style which prevailed amongst all nations in early times from the poverty of language, and which, even after it has ceased to be necessary, continues to be used, both because it is ancient and because it is expressive. In this symbolical style, the objects of sense are employed to represent the conceptions of the mind; actions or things material to represent things spiritual; and under words which are true when interpreted literally, there is couched some more exalted meaning. To the learned it cannot appear surprising, that the book which claims to be the most ancient should adopt a style which occurs in other early productions; that a transaction, which assumes a date next to that of the creation, and the memory of which had probably been preserved amongst the first men by symbols, should be recorded by the historian of a future age in a language which referred to these symbols; and that circumstances might prevent him from attempting to remove the veil which this symbolical language threw over the transaction.

If the rules for expounding the symbolical style, which have been investigated by the learned, are applied to the narration in the third

chapter of Genesis, with the same candor with which they are usually applied to every other subject, the difficulties arising from the literal sense of the words will in a great measure vanish. It will readily be admitted, that although the tree did not possess any power of making those who ate the fruit of it wise, it might be called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because, the prohibition to eat of it being the trial of man's obedience, it was made known to other beings, by means of this tree, whether he was good or evil, and he himself, in eating of it, learnt by sad experience the distinction between good and evil; it will be admitted, that if an intelligent spirit chose for a season to conceal himself under the body of a serpent, the actions of this spirit might, during that time, be ascribed to a serpent; and that if Moses had no commission to explain the rank, the character, and the motives of this spirit, because the state of religious knowledge which the world then possessed rendered it inexpedient for them to receive this communication, he could in no other way record the transaction but by retaining the name of the animal under whose form the spirit had appeared; and, if these things be admitted, it will follow that the words of the sentence, "it shall bruise thy head," are the most proper words that could have been used upon the occasion, because, while they apply literally to the animal, they admit easily a higher sense, in which they express the punishment of the spirit.

2. But although it be necessary to look beyond the literal sense of the words, in order to perceive the aptness and the significance of this history, I must warn you against another extreme. Some, with an excess of refinement, have sought to avoid the inconveniences of the literal sense, by considering the third chapter of Genesis as an allegory, not the history of a real transaction, but a moral painting of the violence of appetite, and the gradual introduction of vice in conjunction with the progress of knowledge and the improvements of society. But, however true it may be, that vice arises from the prevalence of appetite over reason, and that men in a civilized state know vices of which barbarous times are ignorant, yet there are two reasons which seem to render it impossible for those who respect the authority of Scripture, to admit this as the true interpretation of the third chapter of Genesis. 1. This chapter is part of a continued history. It is inserted between the account of the creation of the first pair and the birth of their two sons; and it explains the reason of their being driven out of that place, which we had been told in the second chapter had been allotted them by their Creator. Now, not only is it inconsistent with the gravity of an historian, but it detracts in a high degree from the authority of his writings, that in the progress of relating facts so important he should introduce a chapter which, with all the appearance of being a continuation of the history, is only an allegorical representation of the change of manners. 2. The references to this third chapter, which are found in the New Testament, are to us unquestionable vouchers of its being a real history. If you look to 2 Cor. xi. 3, you will perceive that the allusion of the apostle implies his conviction of the fact to which he alludes; and, if you look to 1 Tim. ii. 13, 14, 15, you will find, that what was only implied in the former passage is there expressly asserted.

The transgression of Adam is introduced as a fact of the same authority and notoriety as his creation. The occasion of the transgression, viz. deceit—the order of the transgression, that the woman, not the man, was deceived—and one part of the punishment of the transgression, viz. “in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children”—these three important circumstances are mentioned in such a manner by the apostle, that the historical sense of the whole chapter may be considered as having the sanction of his authority.

It appears from these remarks that we are sufficiently warranted by the rules of sound criticism, in adopting that interpretation which lies in the middle between the two extremes; and the middle interpretation is this, to consider the third chapter of Genesis as the history of a real transaction which took place soon after the creation; and as a history related after the symbolical manner common in early times, but exhibiting clearly under this manner the following important facts. Adam and Eve, being tempted by the suggestions of an evil spirit who appeared to them under the form of a serpent, transgressed the commandment of their Creator. In consequence of this transgression, the ground which God had given them was cursed, sorrow became the portion of their life, and they were subjected to death, the sanction which God has annexed to his commandment. Sentence was also pronounced upon the tempter. As he appeared before God in the same shape in which he tempted the woman, the whole of the sentence is applicable to a literal serpent: and the first part of it, Gen. iii. 14, has been generally understood to imply a degradation of the serpent from the figure which he had, and the life which he led before the temptation, to the state in which we see him. But the second part of the sentence, Gen. iii. 15, although applicable to the antipathy with which the human race regards an odious and dangerous animal, admits also of a higher sense; and whatever it might convey to Adam and Eve, is now understood by us to be significant of that victory which the seed of the woman, *i. e.* a person descended from the woman, was at a future period to gain through suffering, over the evil spirit, who had assumed the form of a serpent.

This middle interpretation of the third chapter of Genesis, which the rules of sound criticism warrant, is very much confirmed by its being agreeable to the sense of the Jewish church. Bishop Sherlock, with the ingenuity and ability which distinguish all his writings, has collected the evidence of this point in the third of his discourses upon prophecy, and in a dissertation annexed to them, entitled, *The sense of the ancients before Christ upon the circumstances and consequences of the fall.* His account of the history of that transaction is so sound and clear, that I shall give a short specimen of the manner in which he attempts to prove, that what I called the middle interpretation, is agreeable to the sense of the Jewish church.

We know that the books of the Apocrypha were written before the days of our Saviour; and in them we find the following expressions, which are clear evidences that the Jews of those days considered the third chapter of Genesis as the history of a real transaction, and at the same time looked beyond the literal sense. Wisd. ii. 23, 24, “For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of

his own eternity. Nevertheless, through envy of the devil, came death into the world, and they that do hold of his side do find it." Eccles. xxv. 24, "Of the woman came the beginning of sin, and through her we all die." Dr. Sherlock traces in the book of Job, which we have reason to believe was written before any of the books of Moses, many delicate allusions to the circumstances mentioned in the third chapter of Genesis, sufficient to show that the transaction there recorded was known to the author of this book. The words of Zophar, Job xx. 4, 5, 6, have a good moral meaning according to any interpretation which you can give them. But if you understand by the hypocrite, as the Chaldee paraphrast has done, the tempter or accuser, *i. e.* the spirit who tempted by deceit, and at the same time recollect the views suggested to Eve, and the punishment pronounced upon Adam, you will feel that the significancy and energy of the verses are very much improved. The twenty-sixth chapter of Job is a magnificent description of the works of creation, and it concludes with these words, "By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens, his hand hath formed the crooked serpent. If nothing more is meant than the formation of the animal, it appears strange that an exertion of power so much inferior to all the others should be mentioned after them. But if the crooked serpent is employed to mark the spirit who once assumed that form, this expression forms a fit conclusion of the whole description, because it is the most explicit declaration of the sovereignty of God, in opposition to an opinion which early prevailed, that there is in nature an evil principle independent of the good. Dr. Sherlock further observes, that in different places of Isaiah and Micah, the enemies of God are metaphorically styled Leviathan, the crooked serpent, the dragon; that the Son of God is represented by the Psalmist as treading upon the adder, and his enemies as licking the dust; and that in one of those figurative descriptions of the new heavens and the new earth, *i. e.* the blessed change introduced by the dispensation of the Gospel, which occur often in Isaiah: the concluding words are, "And dust shall be the serpent's meat." Isaiah lxv. 25.

It will not appear to any person of taste that some of these allusions are of little avail in this argument, because they are expressed in few words; for it is universally allowed that the shortest incidental reference to an historical fact, by a subsequent writer, may be of such a kind as to afford a decisive proof of his knowledge of that fact; and when we add to these allusions, what Bishop Sherlock's subject did not lead him to mention, the frequent references to this history which are found in the New Testament, it seems to be a matter beyond doubt that he has given a just account of the sense of the ancient Jewish church. Thus Paul says, Rom. v. 12, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." Satan is styled in the book of Revelation, xii. 9, "the old serpent which deceiveth the whole world;" and John viii. 44, our Lord calls him a murderer and a liar from the beginning, *αὐθροποκτονος ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, καὶ ψευστῆς*, two names which most fitly express his having brought death upon the first pair by deceit. John says, 1 John iii. 8, "The devil sinneth from the beginning; for this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil;" and, Rev. xx. 2, xii. 10, he represents

the coming of the kingdom of God, and the power of his Christ, by "that old serpent the accuser of the brethren being cast down." Christians are represented as partaking in this triumph; for as Christ, while he was upon earth, gave his disciples power over all the power of the enemy, and made the spirits subject to them, so the apostle, writing to the church of Rome, says, Rom. xvi. 20, "And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly;" and the last chapter of the book of Revelation describes, with the most marked allusion to the third chapter of Genesis, a time when all the effects of his temptation are to disappear. In Genesis, the ground is cursed, and a flaming sword guards the tree of life. In the Revelation, they who enter through the gates into the city, which is there described, are said to have a right to the tree of life; the tree grows in the midst of the street, and on either side of the river; and the leaves of it are for the healing of the nations; and, it is added, there shall be no more curse. The effects of the curse are exhausted with regard to all who enter into the city. Thus the beginning and the end of the Bible lend their authority in support of each other. The transaction recorded in the beginning explains the reason of many expressions which occur in the progress of Scripture; and the description which forms the conclusion reflects light upon the opening. Whatever opinion we may entertain of the third chapter of Genesis when we read it singly, it swells in our conceptions as we advance; and all its meaning and its importance become manifest, when we recognise the features of this early transaction in that magnificent scene by which the mystery of God shall be finished.

SECTION II.

I HAVE judged it necessary to unfold thus fully the principles upon which we interpret the account given in Scripture of the introduction of sin. The event thus interpreted is known by the name of the fall; a word which does not occur in Scripture, but which has probably been borrowed by Christians from Wisdom x. 1. "She preserved the first formed father of the world, that was created alone, and brought him out of his fall." "His fall" is expressive of that change upon his mind, his body, and his outward circumstances, which was the consequence of Adam's transgression.

Wishing to begin with the simplest view of the subject, I have not hitherto spoken of this event in any other light than as if it had been merely personal. But I have now to engage in those intricate questions that have been agitated concerning the effects, which the fall of Adam has produced upon his posterity. The opinions with regard to this matter may be reduced to four; and the order of stating them is dictated by their nature, for they rise above one another in the following gradation.

1. The first opinion is that which was published by Pelagius, a Briton, A. D. 410, which was adopted by Socinus in the sixteenth century, and is held by the modern Socinians. It is admitted, even according to this opinion, that Adam, by eating of the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil, transgressed the divine commandment and exposed himself to the displeasure of his Creator. But the consequences of this displeasure are not considered as having impaired the powers of his nature, or as extending to his posterity in such a manner as to do them the smallest hurt. He was a fallible mortal creature by the condition of his being, *i. e.* he was liable to sin from the moment that he was created, and he would have died whether he had sinned or not. He continued, after the action recorded in Genesis, to be such as he was at his creation, and all his posterity are born in similar circumstances. Adam was indeed driven from that paradise which had been assigned as his abode, and by many inconveniences in his situation, was made to feel the effects of his transgression; but these very inconveniences, while they reminded him that he had transgressed, tended to prevent him from going farther astray; the labour with which he had to eat his bread was a salutary discipline, and the recollection of his folly became a lesson of wisdom. The posterity of Adam in like manner are placed in a state of trial; and as their minds are as enlightened and as virtuous as his was, their situation is not more unfavourable. Death to them, as to him, is a natural event, arising from the structure of the body, and indicated by many symptoms; and the shortness of their abode upon earth joins its influence to the common evils of life, in teaching them to apply their hearts to wisdom. If Adam and Eve, by being the first that sinned, had not any examples of vice to entice them, yet neither did they behold any examples of its punishment: whereas if we are in danger of following the vices of those who went before us, yet we may learn from the history of the world, and from our own observation, to guard against the fatal tendency of the principle of imitation.

The amount then of this opinion is that our first parents, who sinned by eating the forbidden fruit, were not distinguished in any essential respect from those who sin in after ages, and that our condition is not the worse for their sin; that as they were to blame for yielding to a temptation which they might have resisted, so all of us, by a proper attention in cultivating our natural powers, may maintain our innocence amidst the temptations with which we are surrounded; and, therefore, that we fall short of that which it is in our power to do, if we do not yield a more perfect obedience to the law of God than Adam yielded.

There is a simplicity in this system which appears at first sight to recommend it. It seems to be rational and philosophical to say, that human nature is the same now as when it proceeded from the hands of the Creator, and to resolve the changes of character which it has exhibited, into the effects of the progress of society. But the fact is, that even the ancient philosophers did not consider this as a satisfying account of many circumstances in the present condition of human nature, and the account falls so very far short of all the views which the Scriptures give upon this subject, and requires such violence to be done to particular passages, that many, who are decidedly hostile to the Calvinistic system, finding the Pelagian untenable, have had recourse to a second opinion.

2. The second opinion may be called the Arminian, as deriving its

origin from Arminius, a divine of the seventeenth century. It holds the middle place between the Socinian and the Calvinistic systems. It is explained with clearness, and defended with much ability in a Latin treatise by Whitby, the commentator upon the New Testament, entitled, *Tractatus de Imputatione Peccati Adami*, from which I take the account of it that I am now to give.

According to this opinion, although the first man had a body naturally frail and mortal, his life would have been for ever preserved by the bounty of his Creator, had he continued obedient; and the instrument employed by God to preserve his mortal body from decay was the tree of life. Death was declared to be the penalty of transgression; and, therefore, as soon as he transgressed, he was removed at a distance from the tree of life; and his posterity inheriting his natural mortality, and not having access to the tree of life, are subjected to death. It is therefore said by Paul, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men. In Adam all die. By one man's offence death reigned by one."* These expressions clearly point out death to be the consequence of Adam's transgression, an evil brought upon his posterity by his fault; and this the Arminians understand to be the whole meaning of its being said, "Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his image;"† and of Paul's saying, "We have borne the image of the earthly."‡

It is admitted, however, by those who hold the second opinion, that this change upon the condition of mankind, from a life preserved without end, to mortality, was most unfavourable to their moral character. The fear of death enfeebles and enslaves the mind; the pursuit of those things which are necessary to support a frail perishing life engrosses and contracts the soul; and the desires of sensual pleasure are rendered more eager and ungovernable, by the knowledge that the time of enjoying them soon passes away. Hence arise envy of those who have a larger share of the good things of this life—strife with those who interfere in our enjoyments—impatience under restraint—and sorrow and repining when pleasure is abridged. And to this variety of turbulent passions, the natural fruits of the punishment of Adam's transgression, there are also to be added, all the fretfulness and disquietude occasioned by the diseases and pains which are inseparable from the condition of a mortal being. In this way the Arminians explain such expressions as these, "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners;" "all are under sin;" "behold I was shapen in iniquity,"§ *i. e.* all men, in consequence of Adam's sin, are born in these circumstances,—under that disposition of events which subjects them to the dominion of passion, and exposes them to so many temptations, that it is impossible for any man to maintain his integrity. And hence, they say, arises the necessity of a Saviour, who, restoring to man the immortality which he had forfeited, may be said to have abolished death; who effectually delivers his followers from that bondage of mind, and that corruption of

* Rom. v. 12, 17. 1 Cor. xv. 22.

† Gen. v. 3.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 49.

§ Rom. v. 19; iii. 9. Psal. li. 5.

character which are connected with the fear of death ; who, by his perfect obedience, obtains pardon for those sins into which they have been betrayed by their condition ; and by his Spirit enables them to overcome the temptations which human nature of itself cannot withstand.

According to this opinion, then, the human race has suffered universally in a very high degree by the sin of their first parent. At the same time, the manner of their suffering is analagous to many circumstances in the ordinary dispensations of Providence ; for we often see children, by the negligence or fault of their parents, placed in situations very unfavourable both to their prosperity and to their improvement ; and we can trace the profligacy of their character to the defects of their education, to the example set before them in their youth, and to the multiplied temptations in which, from a want of due attention on the part of others, they find themselves early entangled. All this is the same in kind with that account of the effects of Adam's transgression which the Arminians give ; so that the second opinion is not attended with any difficulties peculiar to the Christian religion ; and did it exhaust the meaning of those passages of Scripture from which our knowledge of that transaction must be derived, we should be delivered from some of the most embarrassing questions in theology. But we must not be afraid of following the truth, because it might be easier to stop short before we arrive at it ; and therefore it is necessary for me to state, that this second opinion, however plausible, does not appear to give a complete account of all the circumstances, which both Scripture and experience direct us to take into view, when we speak of the effects which the sin of Adam produced upon his posterity ; and that the third opinion implies a great deal more.

3. As the third opinion, which forms the foundation of what is called the Calvinistic system, is delivered both in the articles of the church of England, and in the Confession of Faith of the church of Scotland, I shall give the amount of it in the words of the two churches.

In the sixth chapter of the Confession of Faith, it is said, "our first parents, by their sin, fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin ; the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, are conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation ; and from this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions." In like manner, it is said in the ninth article of the church of England, "Original sin standeth not in the following or imitation of Adam, (as the Pelagians do vainly talk,) but it is the fault or corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam, whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil."

This opinion is supported in all the Calvinistic systems of divinity by nearly the same arguments. But in stating the grounds of it, I shall take, as my principal guide, Mr. Edwards, formerly president of the college of New Jersey in America, who has written able treatises upon different branches of the Calvinistic system, and whose defence

of the doctrine of original sin contains the fullest and acutest answers that I have seen, to the objections commonly urged against that doctrine.

The fundamental fact, upon which the third opinion rests, is this, that men in all countries and in all varieties of situation are sinners; by which it is not meant that all men are equally bad, or that every man commits every sin; but the meaning is, that the whole history of mankind does not afford an instance of a perfect freedom from sin, either in any body of people, or even in any one individual. Without looking back upon the universal prevalence of idolatry, and the enormities with which it was accompanied in the heathen world, even if we form our opinion of the human race from the appearances which it has exhibited in those lands that have been blessed with revelation, we shall find that a great part transgress the laws of God in a high degree, and in various respects; that all the means employed to prevent or to correct wickedness prove ineffectual for their amendment; and that in the obedience of the best, there are such defects as constitute them sinners. But the universal prevalence of sin, in all possible circumstances, and under every measure of advantage, is the decisive proof of a natural propensity to sin; for we have no other method by which to judge of tendency or propensity, than by observing the same effect in every change of situation. It is from this kind of observation we say that heavy bodies have a tendency to fall; that animals have certain instincts; that individuals of the human race have characteristical propensities. In like manner, the propensity of the whole race to sin is gathered from the uniformity with which the race has sinned. If the effect arose merely from external circumstances, without any natural propensity, it could not take place so steadily; if the mind had no greater propensity to that which is evil than to that which is good, some circumstances must have occurred, in the infinite variety of events since the beginning of the world, fitted to prevent the appearance of the effect altogether, by exhibiting the human race completely virtuous. But if men have always in one degree or other sinned, there must be something in their nature that indisposes them for their duty, which is the very thing meant by a corruption of nature.

While we thus infer, from the universal practice of sin, that the nature of man is corrupt, we learn from Scripture that this is not the state in which Adam was created. Solomon gives us as the result of all his observations, Eccles. vii. 29, "Lo this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." The solemnity with which the remark is introduced, and the natural significancy of the words, lead us to consider Solomon as speaking of the very great difference between the crooked paths which men now pursue, and the state of uprightness in which the first man was made: and the remark, thus understood, is agreeable to what we may easily gather from laying different passages together. Thus, Gen. i. 31, man was made at the time, when "God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good:" and the formation of this part of the divine workmanship is expressed in these peculiar words, Gen. i. 27, "So God created man in his own image, κατ' εἰκόνα Θεοῦ, in the image of God created he him." The

Socinians indeed interpret this expression as meaning nothing more than dominion; man, they say, the lord of this lower world, is the image of God, the sovereign of the universe. But the words, as they are placed in Genesis, appear to imply something distinct from the dominion given to man, and antecedent to it; and that they really express the character of his mind, is manifest from the references made to them in the New Testament, where the character, formed by the Spirit of God in all true Christians, is thus described, "The new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness,—which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him."* Any person who has studied the Old and the New Testament together, and who has marked the perfect consistency that runs through the whole language of Scripture, cannot entertain a doubt that Paul, who gives these descriptions, understood by Adam's being created in the image of God, his being created in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness.

But Adam, who, in the day that God created him, was made in the likeness of God, is said, after he had transgressed the commandment of God, to have begotten a son in his own likeness after his image. Now this image of Adam, which all his posterity bear, is something very different from the image of God in which he was made; and it is not expressive merely of mortality, as the Arminians say, but it marks, as the image of God did, a character of mind. This is manifest from the general strain of Scripture. For the Scriptures not only declare that all have sinned, but they seem to refer the abounding of iniquity to a cause antecedent to education, example, or the operation of particular circumstances; and in numberless places they represent the nature of man as corrupt. Of this kind are the following: "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." "Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." "The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead."† To these are to be joined from the Old Testament several very striking expressions in the book of Job, a book regarded as at least of equal antiquity with the books of Moses, and of the more weight in this argument, that the personages introduced into it do not discover any acquaintance with the Mosaic dispensation. Of this kind are the following: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." "What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman that he should be righteous? Behold he putteth no trust in his saints; yea the heavens are not clean in his sight. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water."‡ In the New Testament, the expression of our Lord, John iii. 6, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh;" and the words of his apostle, Rom. vii. 18, "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;" and all those pictures of the works of the flesh which abound in the epistles ap-

* Ephes. iv. 24. Colos. iii. 10.

† Gen. viii. 21. Ps. ii. 5; lviii. 3. Eccles. ix. 3.

‡ Job xiv. 4; xv. 14, 15, 16.

pear to afford evidence that, throughout the New Testament, the natural state of every man is represented as a state of depravity and alienation from God.

I have now given a general view of the train of argument which is employed to establish this fact, that human nature is corrupted by the fall of Adam. But after the fact is established, there remain various questions with regard to the manner of the fact, which have been agitated with much heat, and with very little edification.

The church of Rome consider that universal propensity to evil of which we have been speaking, and to which they give the name of *concupiscentia*, as the natural state of man, *i. e.* the state in which he was created. This propensity was, in Adam, under the restraint of that superior divine principle which he derived from communion with God; and in this restraint consisted his uprightness. When the superior principle was, in consequence of his transgression, withdrawn from him and his posterity, the propensity remained. But, being the nature of man, it is not in itself sinful, and becomes sin only when it is carried forth into action; as it is said, James i. 15, "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin." In answer to this system, it has been justly argued, that the disorders of the passions are in themselves strong indications of depravity; that they are opposite to the spiritual and refined morality of the gospel, which requires purity of heart; that *concupiscentia*, in several places of the New Testament, particularly in the Epistle to the Romans, chap. vii. is spoken of as sin, and that James means that lust, which is sinful while it dwells in the heart, when it hath conceived, brings forth sinful actions. An opinion, diametrically opposite to this system of the church of Rome, was broached in the last century by Flaccus Illyricus, an obscure divine, that original sin is the very substance of human nature, a being operating and existing in all men. This opinion is justly regarded as monstrous, even by those who hold the corruption of human nature in its greatest extent; and it would not have found a place in this general view of opinions concerning original sin, if the mention of it did not assist you in apprehending the true system of the Calvinists upon this point. They consider the corruption of human nature, not as a substance, but as a defect or perversion of its qualities, by which they are deprived of their original perfection; and applying to this corruption various expressions in which the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, describes the state of the heathen world before Christianity appeared, they consider the natural state of man as a state in which the understanding is darkened, the heart alienated from the life of God, the affections set upon earthly things, and all the powers of the mind employed in fulfilling the desires of the flesh. This state is called by the apostle "being dead in trespasses and sins;" an expression which, when taken in conjunction with the threatening to Adam, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," has suggested what divines call spiritual death. This denotes an estrangement from God, the fountain of life, and an inability in man to return to God; and being considered as extending from Adam through his posterity, it is, in the highest sense, the corruption of the nature of a creature, who was made after the image of God.

This account of the corruption of human nature does not imply that man has lost the natural capacity of knowing God, or the natural sense of the distinction between right and wrong. The same powers of reason by which he conducts the business of life, or makes discoveries in science, lead him to infer, from the works of creation, the existence and the perfections of the Deity ; and those moral sentiments, upon which all the intercourse of society and the principles of legislation proceed, dictate to him that conduct which, as an individual, he ought to observe. Accordingly, the apostle to the Romans, at the very time he is proving the universal corruption of human nature, says that heathen idolatry was inexcusable, because the invisible things of God may be understood by the things which he hath made ; and further, that the Gentiles, who have not the law, *i. e.* any written law, are a law unto themselves.* Man, therefore, is not, according to the third opinion, so far degraded by the corruption of his nature as to cease to be a moral agent. In every situation he appears capable of the sentiment of religion ; in every country, and under every form of society, his heart has glowed with the feelings of private affection and tenderness ; and the history of his exploits has been ennobled by many disinterested and heroic exertions. But, without any invidious detraction from those amiable dispositions and those splendid actions, which constitute the principal charm of the ancient poets and historians, it will occur to you that they were either wholly unconnected with principles of religion, or that they were accompanied with superstition so gross and childish, as not in reality to contradict that system, which places the corruption of human nature in an estrangement from the true God. Amidst all the offices of private kindness or of public spirit which we have been accustomed to admire, men were without God in the world ; and there does not appear, from the full experiment which was made under the philosophy and government of ancient times, the smallest probability that any improvement of the understanding which they could produce, or any refinement of the heart which they could form, would have recovered man from what is termed the spiritual death of the soul, so as to bring him back to the fountain of life, and restore that communion with God, and that image of God, which are essential to the rectitude of his nature.

After ascertaining what is meant, according to the third opinion, by the corruption of human nature, it has been inquired in what manner this corruption is transmitted, how it comes about that the powers of our nature inherit from Adam this defect and perversion. But this is an inquiry in which it is impossible to attain any satisfying conclusion, because it resolves into principles of which we are totally ignorant. We infer, from various appearances, that besides the body which is obvious to our senses, and the growth of which may be traced from the time of its conception, every human being has a principle distinct from matter, which we call the soul. But we know not enough of the nature of the soul to form any judgment with regard to the manner of its connexion with the body, or the kind of influence which the one exerts over the other. If we say with some

* Rom. i. ii.

sects of Christians *animam esse ex traduce*, that the soul is generated like the body by the act of the parents, we seem to approach to materialism. If we say, as the Calvinists generally do, that souls are successively made by the Creator, and joined by his act to those bodies which they are to animate, we seem to form a rational hypothesis. But having never been admitted to the secret counsels of the Father of Spirits, we find this act of his in many points to us inexplicable. Here are two substances, not only of a different nature, but, according to this hypothesis, of a different origin, most intimately joined. We feel daily the effects of their junction. Yet we cannot pretend to assign the period when it commenced, the reasons which determined the Creator to join a soul to one body rather than to another, or the bond which keeps together that soul and body which he chose to unite. These are questions which reason does not resolve, and upon which revelation does not profess to throw any light. They meet us upon many subjects in natural religion, and they recur when we attempt to speculate concerning the manner in which the corruption of human nature is transmitted. But in revelation, as in natural religion, they are questions concerning the manner of the fact, not concerning the fact itself; and, therefore, if the Scriptures reveal, or if experience assures us, that this corruption is transmitted, the questions which may be started, and which cannot be answered, are of no more weight to shake the evidence of this fact, than questions of the same kind are to shake the evidence of the union of soul and body. We cannot doubt, from our acquaintance with the government of God, that if the Creator infuses a soul into a body, either at the time of the conception of the body, or at any subsequent period, he acts according to a general course which is established with wisdom; and it appears from our experience to be part of this course, that the likeness of children to their parents extends beyond the features of their body. There are not only constitutional diseases, but constitutional vices; there is a character which often runs through a family for many generations; and there are numberless instances where the resemblance cannot be explained by imitation. The same Scriptures, from which we infer that a general corruption pervades the posterity of Adam, intimate that it is transmitted by natural generation, that is to say, that the constitution of which we observe many particular instances extends to this universal fact. But they leave the transmission of this corruption upon the same footing, and in the same darkness, with the propagation of the soul; and their silence is sufficient to check the speculations of every sober inquirer.

This third opinion concerning the effects of the sin of Adam is supported by many passages in Scripture; it appears to have been the received opinion of the Jewish church; and some traditions of it having probably reached the heathen philosophers, and coming in aid of the conclusions that might be drawn from universal experience, may have led Socrates to speak of *κακον εμφυτον*, a phrase equivalent to what we call natural corruption; and Plato to ascribe the causes of our vices to those first principles which we inherit from our parents.

But there yet remains a fourth opinion upon this subject.

4. It is held by many divines, it is part of the creed of the church

of Scotland, and it seems to be implied in the language of the articles of the church of England, although it is not there directly expressed, that the sin of Adam is imputed to his posterity; and that by means of this imputation, all who are descended from him are guilty before God. The opinion of those who hold the imputation of the sin of Adam includes the truth of the third opinion; but they hold something more; and you will understand in what respect the fourth opinion goes beyond the third, by attending to the meaning of two terms which are of frequent use amongst those who write upon original sin, the mediate and immediate imputation of the sin of Adam. The corruption which we derive from Adam has been styled the mediate imputation of his sin; it becomes ours only in consequence of our connexion with him, but it is truly ours because it infects our nature. Now those who hold the fourth opinion say, that besides this corruption of nature, although always in conjunction with it, there is an immediate imputation, by which the sin of Adam is counted in the sight of God as ours. Accordingly, you will find the third and fourth opinion joined in the sixth chapter of our Confession of Faith, as forming together the complete view of the effects of Adam's sin. "They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation."

The reasoning, upon which this fourth opinion has been grounded, is of the following kind. In those transactions which took place soon after the creation, Adam appears as the representative of the human race. The first blessing, "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it," both by the terms in which it is conceived, and by the nature of the thing, was not a personal blessing, but, although addressed to Adam and Eve, conveyed to their posterity, as well as to themselves, a right to occupy the earth, to rule over the inferior animals, and to employ their service. Had the penalty annexed to disobedience, "in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," been executed as instantly as the words might have led Adam to expect, he could not have had any posterity. It was the delaying the execution of this part of the sentence which left time for the appearance of the human race upon earth; but in consequence of the sin of their first parents, they come into the world subject to death; and the calamities in their persons, which mankind continually experience, are the daily execution of the former parts of the sentence pronounced upon Adam. The ground is cursed to them for his sake; and even if we admit the ingenious theory which Bishop Sherlock has ably supported, that part of the curse upon the ground was remitted by the blessing pronounced upon Noah after the flood, we must acknowledge that the full extent of that curse had been felt by all the inhabitants of the earth for many generations. Here then are unquestionably the effects of the sin of Adam reaching to his posterity; in other words, it is counted to them in the judgment of God as if it were their own; so that Adam in this sin, as well as in the other transactions between the Creator and our first parents, appears not as an individual, but as being what divines call a federal head, who, in the covenant that was made with him, acted for his posterity.

These views, suggested by the consequences of the transaction before the fall, are considered as implied in an expression, Ephes. ii. 3. *φύσει τεκνα ὀργῆς*; and they are very much confirmed by the reasoning of the Apostle Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, chap. v. The apostle had proved largely, in the beginning of that epistle, the universal sinfulness of mankind. From thence, he had proceeded to discourse of the richness of that grace by which sinners are justified, *i. e.* brought into a state of favour and reconciliation; and in reference to what he had said of the manner of this justification, he thus expresses himself, Rom. v. 11, “we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement.” At this point, he looks back upon the two subjects which he had discussed, and with the comprehension and rapidity of thought which distinguish the writings of Paul, he brings forward to the view of the Romans a striking similarity between the two subjects. The similarity is this, that both sin, and the remedy of sin, were introduced through one man. By Jesus we have received the atonement: by one man sin entered into the world. This similarity in two things diametrically opposite was of itself worthy of attention. But the apostle had a particular reason for bringing it forward and dwelling upon it, which we may gather from the preceding part of the epistle. The great distinction of mankind in those times was into Jew and Gentile. Accordingly, the apostle, when he was proving the sinfulness of mankind, found it necessary to show that the Jews in this respect had no advantage above the Gentiles, and rendered his proposition, in the apprehension of those to whom he wrote, completely universal, by concluding both Jews and Gentiles under sin. But there could not be a more effectual way of confirming the universality of this his fundamental proposition, than by recurring to the similarity which he is now going to state. For, in stating this similarity, he draws the attention of his readers from Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation, of whom they boasted, and through whom they inherited many blessings, to a more remote ancestor, from whom both Jews and Gentiles were descended, and through whom both inherited the same dismal legacy. In ascending to Adam the distinction between Jews and Gentiles is lost, and the necessity of a Saviour is laid in that condition which is common to all mankind.

This account of the occasion of introducing the discourse, which we are about to consider, explains the meaning of the two words *δια τουτο*, with which the twelfth verse begins. *Δια τουτο ὥσπερ δι' ἑνός ἀνθρώπου ἡ ἁμαρτία εἰς τον κόσμον εἰσῆλθε, καὶ δια τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ θάνατος, καὶ οὕτως εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους ὁ θάνατος διηλθεν, ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον.* *Τουτο* does not refer to any particular word in the preceding verse, but to the whole of what the apostle had said in the former part of the epistle. “This being the view which I have given of the sinfulness of mankind and of their deliverance, you will perceive that similarity between the two which I am now to state.” *Ὡςπερ* gives notice that the similarity is to be stated; but the reddition of it, or the other subject similar to that mentioned in the twelfth verse, is not formally enunciated till the eighteenth. The intervening verses, after the manner of Paul, are filled up with illustrations of the first subject, or with the mention of points of dissimilitude between the two, before the point in which

they are similar is clearly expressed. The first three clauses of the twelfth verse have already occurred in speaking of the effects of Adam's sin, and they are not attended with any peculiar difficulty. But the last clause of this verse, ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον, admits of three different interpretations, and the nature of its connection with the rest of the verse appears to vary according to the interpretation which is adopted. It has been rendered, "in whom, viz. the first man, all sinned"—"unto which, viz. death, all sinned"—"inasmuch as, viz. for this which is, all sinned." The first does not really express more than may be gathered from the apostle's argument, and therefore the sense is no reason for rejecting it. But it will occur to you, that according to this interpretation, the antecedent, ἀνθρώπου, is very remote, and that several masculine words have intervened. The second refers the relative to the nearest antecedent ἁμαρτος, and marks truly the effect or consequence of sin, but it marks that effect by an expression harsh and obscure. The third renders ἐφ' ᾧ in a manner agreeable to the analogy of the Greek language, and the use of this phrase in classical writers. But it would have been more accurate to have rendered ἥμαρτον, "did sin," than "have sinned;" and if our translation be read with this small correction, "forasmuch as, or upon this account which is, all did-sin," the last clause of the twelfth verse, in which the apostle is still stating the first subject, will appear to be perfectly equivalent to the first clause of the nineteenth verse, where the same subject is repeated. "All were constituted sinners by the act of this one man." The reason of this assertion is given in the thirteenth verse. "For before the law of Moses was given, sin was in the world." I need not refer to the book of Genesis for the sins of that period, which are there related: for none will be disposed to deny that sin was in the world, *i. e.* was universally practised, before the children of Israel went out of Egypt; and yet whatever the actions of men in that period had been, they could not have been counted to them as sins, had there been no law; since, according to an axiom often repeated by the apostle, "where no law is, there is no transgression." But the apostle had clearly proved, in the first and second chapters of the epistle, that men never were left without a law, because "the invisible things of God from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made," and "the nations who have not the law, are a law unto themselves." There is a primary universal rule of righteousness written on the heart of man, under which every man is born, by which every man, although he has no other revelation of the divine will, knows that he shall be judged, and every transgression of which is felt to be worthy of death. Had there been no such law, sin could not have been attended with its penal consequence, *i. e.* death.

The word ἀλλὰ, in the fourteenth verse, gives notice of an objection which the apostle is aware might occur to his doctrine in the thirteenth, but which he purposely brings forward, because it is the strongest confirmation of his capital position, that sin and death entered into the world by one man. The objection is, that sin appeared by its penal effect, death, in the interval between Adam and Moses, even over those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. It is not obvious who are the persons here meant, and

different interpretations have been given. It appears plain to me, that the apostle cannot mean, as some say, those who had not sinned like Adam, with the punishment of death before their eyes; because the apostle had expressly said, Rom. i. 32, "That the heathen, who were filled with all unrighteousness, knew the judgment of God, and they who commit such things are worthy of death." Besides, it is not pertinent to his argument to say here, that any who sinned, in the interval between Adam and Moses, sinned without knowing, as Adam did, that death is the punishment of sin. For his argument is this; sin cannot be counted to a person, so as to be punished in him, without a law: but sin was punished before the law of Moses existed; the consequence is, that there must be some law antecedent to the law of Moses, and more universal, viz. the law of works given to the first parent of mankind, and extending to all his posterity. Every one that commits sin, therefore, sins after the similitude of Adam's transgression, in this respect, that he sins against the law of his Creator, knowing that he deserves death. But who then are they that have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, and yet death reigns over them? They can be none other than infants, the persons of whom this clause is generally understood; that large proportion of the human race who die before their faculties are so far unfolded, that they are capable of committing any sin. They die in consequence of the law given to their first parent, by which death is declared to be the punishment of sin, and their dying is a proof that his sin is counted to them as theirs. The mention of this striking fact leads the apostle to style Adam *τυπος του μελλοντος*, an image or representation of him that was to come, of Christ, the person by whom the deliverance was to be brought. But he does not formally state the similarity between the two, until he has touched upon the points of dissimilitude. These are stated in the 15th, 16th, and 17th verses; and the amount of them is this: the value of the gift transcends the extent of the forfeiture, and the grace manifested in the gift goes far beyond every appearance of severity in the condemnation. I will not arrest your attention upon these points of dissimilitude now, because they will occur more properly when we come to speak of the remedy. From the mention of them, the apostle passes on to state explicitly, in verses 18, 19, the similarity between the method in which sin and death were introduced into the world, and the method of our deliverance. The particles *αγα ουν* give notice that he is continuing his discourse, and that he is collecting the former parts of it in approaching to his conclusion. The similarity is this. As by one offence all men are under the condemnation of death, as by the disobedience of one man many were constituted in the sight of God sinners, so by one righteousness, all men obtain the justification of life, and by the obedience of one many shall be constituted in the sight of God righteous. The offence of one is counted to us in such a manner that we suffer the punishment of sin, which a just God would not inflict upon us if we were not considered by him as sinners: the obedience of one is counted to us in such a manner, that we who were sinners are upon account of it justified, *i. e.* considered as righteous by a just God, and received into his favour.

This whole reasoning of the apostle favours the notion of an im-

putation of Adam's sin. The phrase indeed does not occur; but the thing meant by the phrase appears to be the natural meaning of the passage; and I know no better way in which you can satisfy yourselves that it is the true meaning, than by comparing the interpretation now given, with the forced paraphrases to which those are obliged to have recourse, who wish to show that the fourth opinion does not receive any countenance from the authority of Paul.

Upon these two grounds, our daily experience that the effects of Adam's sin yet subsist in the world, and the manner in which the apostle reasons from this fact, that all die, there has been founded that notion, which, from the religious education commonly received in this country, is familiar to your minds, that there was at the beginning of the world a covenant in which Adam acted as the representative of his posterity. It is generally said, in support of this notion, that Adam had every possible advantage for keeping the covenant, and no reasonable temptation to break it, so that human virtue could not have had a fairer trial; that human affairs could not proceed unless parents acted for their children, and rulers for their subjects; and that we are accustomed to behold not only many instances in which individuals suffer for the faults of those who went before them, but also many kinds of civil contracts, that include posterity in transactions, which, although they had no opportunity of giving their consent to them, are considered, in the eye of the law, as theirs. It is further said, that our usages and ideas with regard to such transactions occur often in the Old Testament, where the Almighty condescends to represent that act of sovereignty, by which he chose the posterity of Abraham, as a covenant made with their ancestor, and the law given by Moses as a covenant made with the Israelites in the wilderness, not for themselves only, but for their posterity;* a covenant which both conveyed blessings to the descendants of those with whom it was made, and also laid them under many restraints; and a covenant constituted in this manner, that succeeding generations endured many calamities, and the Jews at this day are continuing to suffer, for the sins of their fathers.

It is true indeed that we are not warranted to consider this part of the constitution of that covenant which was made with the Israelites, as in all respects a specimen of the general plan of the divine administration, because this constitution extended only to the temporal affairs of the Jewish nation. And yet, when we are told by that apostle, from whose writings our knowledge of the new dispensation is chiefly derived, that those who have committed no sin suffer death, which entered into the world by the sin of the first Adam, it is impossible for us to avoid concluding, that as there was a particular constitution for the Jewish state, in which the iniquities of the fathers were visited upon the children, there may be an universal constitution for the human race, by which the sin of their first parent extends to all his offspring.

It is readily admitted that difficulties appear to us to attend this constitution. But difficulties of the same kind are perpetually occurring upon subjects in theology, not peculiar to this system, but nearly

* Deut. xxix. 10—15.

the same, in whatever manner we attempt to account for the origin of evil : and the same account may be given of all of them. We see only in parts ; but we are not qualified to judge of the ways of God without seeing the whole, because his administration embraces the whole. There may be a depth of wisdom in the constitution of which we are now speaking, that we are unable to penetrate : there may be advantages resulting from it to the human race, that infinitely counter-balance the evils to which it gives occasion. That it is not unbecoming the Ruler of the universe, appears with the clearest evidence from hence, that a constitution of the same kind, with regard to some particulars, may be observed in the ordinary course of his providence towards all men, and in the whole history of that people, of whom he condescended to appear as the immediate Governor.

Although it may appear to you from what has been said, that we are warranted to employ the notion of a covenant, when we speak of the manner in which the sin of Adam is imputed to his posterity, it is proper to warn you that there is a danger of falling into very great improprieties both in language and in sentiment, by pushing the analogy too far, and that you must not be surprised if all the explications of this subject appear to you unsatisfactory. When you read that Adam is the root, and that, as in the communication of the juices of a tree, the guilt is necessarily conveyed from the root to all the branches ;—that Adam and his posterity constitute one moral person ;—that the whole human race was, at the beginning, one mass acting by its head ;—and that all the individuals of that mass consented to his act, because they were in him, from whom they afterwards proceeded,—you will probably feel, as I did, that they are repugnant to that distinct agency, which enters into our notion of accountable beings, as essential to that character. But you will remember that those who say such things attempt to explain what they do not understand ; and you will learn, by their failure, that it is wiser to refrain from such attempts, and to rest in what the Scriptures teach with regard to the imputation of Adam's sin, which may be summed up in a few words. The effects of the sin of Adam reach to his posterity in such a manner, that they suffer death, which is declared in Scripture to be the wages of sin, as if his sin had been committed by them. The Scriptures, in stating the effects of Adam's sin make no distinction between that death which his posterity visibly suffer, and that eternal destruction which is often called by the name of death ; and therefore we are not warranted to say that the dissolution of soul and body is the only effect of Adam's sin, which extends to his posterity. In what manner the mercy of God will dispose hereafter of those infants who die in consequence of Adam's sin, without having done any evil, the Scriptures have not declared ; and it does not become us to say more than is said in the excellent words of our Confession of Faith : “ Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when and where, and how he pleaseth.”* With regard to those that are grown up, the corruption of nature inherited from Adam, in consequence of which they daily commit sins of their own, is joined with the imputation of

* Confession of Faith, x. 3.

his sin ; and when we think of their situation, we ought not to allow ourselves, even in imagination, to separate the two.

The amount of all that has been said concerning that situation for which the Gospel brings a remedy is this. Those who consider the Scriptures as declaring that the whole human race are both guilty and depraved before God perceive, in this picture, the absolute necessity of a remedy. But even those who do not admit the truth of this picture acknowledge, without hesitation, that men are sinners. They differ in opinion from the former with regard to the malignity of sin, the manner in which it was introduced into the world, and the nature of that constitution under which the guilt and misery of it are transmitted ; and hence they entertain different apprehensions with regard to the nature and extent of the remedy, and the manner in which it is applied to the soul. But as the words of the apostle, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," are subscribed by every Christian, the fundamental proposition upon which the Gospel rests is universally assented to ; and from this proposition we now proceed to examine the different opinions concerning the remedy.

CHAPTER II.

OPINIONS CONCERNING THE NATURE OF THE REMEDY.

As Christians of all denominations admit that men have sinned, they admit also that the Gospel is a remedy for the present state of moral evil. They readily adopt that "faithful saying," which the apostle Paul declares to be "worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." They adore the love of the Father in sending the Son upon this errand. They profess the warmest gratitude to him "who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity." They acknowledge that the greatest benefits are derived to the world by his sufferings; that we "have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins;" and that by what he did and underwent for our sakes, he is entitled to be honoured as the Saviour, the Deliverer, and the Redeemer of mankind.

But under this uniformity in the language which all who receive the Scriptures are constrained to use, there is concealed much diversity of opinion; and the nature of that remedy, which it is the character of the Gospel to have brought, is one of the subjects in their speculations upon which Christians have departed very far from one another. —The opposite systems are supported partly by general reasonings, and partly by passages of Scripture. The general reasonings are by no means of equal weight upon all sides. But it is possible for able men to reason so plausibly in support of any of the opinions which have been held upon this subject, that the mind might remain in suspense, if the general language of Scripture, when fairly interpreted, did not appear decidedly to favour one of the systems; so that the question concerning the nature of the remedy, like those which we lately discussed concerning the character and dignity of the persons revealed in the Gospel, must be ultimately determined by sound Scripture criticism.

There are three systems with regard to the nature of the remedy, to which we may be able afterwards to affix more significant names from the leading features by which they are distinguished, but which it may suffice at present to mark by calling them the Socinian, the Middle, and the Catholic opinions. By calling the first the Socinian, I do not mean that it was held by Socinus himself, for his opinion went a great deal farther; but it is the opinion held by those who now call themselves Socinians, and it is the simplest system that can be formed with regard to the nature of the remedy. I call the third the Catholic opinion, because it has been generally held in the Chris-

tian church since the days of the apostles, and enters into the creed of almost every established church in Christendom. What I call the Middle opinion arose in the course of the last century out of a part of the system of Socinus. It is disavowed by the modern Socinians; but it has been brought forward by some very able divines both in the church of England, and amongst the dissenters, as the best method of steering clear of the objections that have been made either to the Socinian or to the Catholic system.

I think it of importance to give a fair and complete exhibition of every one of these three systems; and the order of stating them, which appears to be dictated by their nature, is to begin with the Socinian, which is the simplest; to proceed to the middle, which professes to be an improvement upon the Socinian; and to end with the Catholic, which, if it is the truth, will bear the disadvantage arising from the previous exhibition of two systems that are founded upon objections to it, and will approve itself to the understanding to be agreeable both to reason and to Scripture.

SECTION I.

THE fundamental principle of the Socinian system is this. Pure goodness, or a desire to communicate happiness, is conceived by the Socinians to constitute the whole character of the Deity. All the moral attributes of the divine nature are regarded as only modifications of benevolence, and it is believed that nothing either exists in God, or forms a part of his government, which may not be resolved into this principle. Infinitely blessed in himself, he could have no reason for creating the human race but to make them happy. His wisdom discerns the best means of communicating happiness; his power carries these means readily and certainly into effect; and although the means vary according to circumstances, the benevolent purpose from which they proceed is always the same. He hates sin, because it makes his creatures unhappy; he forbids it, that his authority may deter them from doing what is hurtful to themselves; he punishes it, that the experience of suffering may convince them of their error. He employs various means for their reformation; he bears patiently with their obstinacy and heedlessness; and at what time soever the recollection of his prohibition, the suffering of evil, or any other circumstance, brings back to their duty those who have sinned, that goodness of the Deity, which had been exercised under the form of long-suffering during their error, becomes compassion and clemency; he receives his returning children into his favour; and without regard to any external circumstance, or any other being, freely forgives their sins. The supreme ruler of the universe, say the Socinians, in thus freely forgiving all sins merely upon the repentance of the sinner, does injury to none. He only remits a part of his own right, a debt which his offending creatures have contracted to him. The independent felicity of his nature suffers no diminution from his not exacting all that he might claim; the glory of his goodness is illustrated by the happiness which the pardon conveys to the

penitent; and in conferring this pardon freely without any consideration foreign to himself, he sets his creatures an example of generosity in forgiving those offences, which they are daily committing against one another.

This fundamental principle of the Socinian opinion, which seems at first sight to flow from the infinite perfection of the divine nature, and to be most honourable to the Creator and Father of all, is supported by numberless passages of Scripture, which magnify the free grace of God in the pardon of transgressors, which invite them to return, which describe the readiness with which they shall be received, and the joy that there is in heaven over a sinner that repenteth. It is supported by the many instances in which we experience the forbearance of God, that long-suffering which spares us amidst repeated provocations, and leads us by unmerited blessings to repentance. It is supported by all those candid and indulgent sentiments, which dispose us to forget the offences of persons in whom we discover a change of mind, and particularly by parental affection, which, instead of being worn out by the waywardness and perverseness of children, is impatient to embrace them on the first symptoms of a return to obedience. It can easily be conceived that the arguments, of which I have given a short sketch, are capable of receiving much embellishment, and that eloquent men, by fixing the attention upon a particular view of the subject, may leave little doubt in the minds of ordinary readers, that a theory concerning the nature of the remedy offered in the gospel, resting upon this principle as its basis, contains the whole of the truth.

When this principle is applied in forming such a theory, it follows obviously from the principle, that the person who brought the remedy had nothing to do in order to procure the pardon of those who repent. That is freely and purely the effect of the divine goodness. But the circumstances of the world might render it expedient that a declaration of pardon should be made. For if men have been sinners from the beginning of the world, as the Socinians do not deny, if the religion of the heathen was connected with much superstition, *i. e.* with a blind excessive fear of the deity; and if the Jewish religion appointed a costly burdensome method of approaching the God of Israel, which could not be observed by all the nations of the earth, there seems to be much occasion that a religion not confined to a particular tribe, but professing to spread itself over the whole world, and appointing a spiritual worship, should declare, in the most unequivocal and solemn manner, that encouragement to the penitent which is derived from the essential goodness of God. Now such declarations are known to abound in the gospel: and they appear to the Socinians to give the religion of Jesus that importance which every one expects to find in a divine revelation. God appears there in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and repentance and remission of sins are preached in the name of Christ among all nations; not that God is more gracious than he was at any former time; not that Christ did any thing to render God propitious: but he is the messenger who publishes the divine grace. His first words were, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" his own discourses represent God as merciful; his apostles, after his ascension, preached the forgiveness of sins,

saying, "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out," and his whole religion is a standing declaration of this proposition, which was always equally true, but the truth of which was not at all times perfectly understood, that "whosoever confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy."

This proposition, say the Socinians, approves itself by intrinsic evidence to a philosophical mind. But, in order to rouse the attention of the multitude, the person employed by God to publish it to the world was rendered respectable in their eyes by many mighty works. The miracles, which the power of God enabled the messenger of this grace to perform, were the credentials of a divine commission; and a splendor was thrown around his character by the other purposes which his appearance accomplished.

One of these additional purposes was his being the instructor of the world, who not only restored, by the declaration which he was commissioned to make, the natural confidence that men ought to have in the goodness of their Creator, but also taught them the will of God. As the Socinians do not admit that the first man possessed more knowledge and righteousness than any of his posterity, their principles lead them to deny those remains of the image of God which other Christians trace, to detract very much from the authority of the law of nature, and to resolve all religious knowledge into the tradition of some primary revelation. This tradition could not fail to be obscured and corrupted in the progress of ages; and as gross ignorance of the duties of men is known to have overspread the earth, it is manifest that there was much need of the perfect teaching of a man, whose miracles were both a security that he taught the will of God truly, and a call upon men to listen to him. In this opinion of the usefulness of Christianity, all who receive it as a divine revelation readily agree. But the Socinians, as if desirous to atone by this branch of their encomium upon Christianity, for the dishonour which other parts of their system are conceived to do to that religion, go far beyond other Christians in magnifying the importance of the gospel as a method of instruction. They represent its precepts as not only simple, clear, and authoritative, but as inculcating virtues which are neither explicitly taught in the law of Moses, nor deducible from any of its principles; and they allow the messenger of the grace of God all the honour which can accrue to his character and to his religion from the essential superiority of his precepts.

In delivering to a world full of superstition and vice, precepts so opposite to their maxims and manners, the messenger of the grace of God encountered much opposition; he provoked the civil and ecclesiastical rulers—he alarmed the evil passions that he endeavoured to restrain—and after a life marked with uncommon difficulties and unmerited persecution, he was put to death by the violence of his enemies. His death is considered by the Socinians as the unavoidable result of the circumstances in which he published his excellent religion; an event happening without any special appointment of heaven, according to the course of human affairs; for having persevered during a life of suffering in bearing witness to the truth, and being incapable of retracting, even in the immediate prospect of death, like other martyrs he sealed his declaration with his blood. The death

of Christ, even although regarded merely as a natural event, is full of instruction to his followers. The innocence of the illustrious sufferer was made conspicuous by all the circumstances which attended his trial; the patience, the magnanimity, the piety and benevolence which marked the hour of his sufferings, imprint upon those who cherish his memory with affection, all the lessons of his religion; and having taught men the will of God while he lived, he suffered for their benefit, "leaving them an example that they should follow his steps."

But the example exhibited in his sufferings, and the testimony which he bore by them to all that he had said during his life, are not the only benefits of the death of Christ which the modern Socinians admit. They say also, that it confirmed the truth of the promises of God; for his death was necessary in order to his resurrection, and his resurrection not only completes the evidences of his mission, but is the earnest to mankind of life and immortality, that great blessing which he was commissioned to promise. It is this further purpose of the death of Christ which completes the Socinian scheme of Christianity; and therefore, in order to render the view which I am now giving a fair exposition of that scheme, it is necessary to state the peculiar importance which it affixes to this purpose.

Not admitting any forfeiture to have been incurred by the transgression of Adam, the Socinians consider man as mortal, a creature who would have died whether he had sinned or not. Dr. Priestley goes farther upon this subject than some of those who adopt his other principles have yet been able to follow him. He holds that the distinction between soul and body is a popular error, derived from heathen philosophy, but contradicted by reason and Scripture; that man is a homogeneous being, *i. e.* that the powers of thought and sensation belong to the brain, as much as gravity and magnetism belong to other arrangements of matter; and that the whole machine, whose complicated motions had presented the appearance of animal and rational life, is dissolved at death. To Dr. Priestley, therefore, the resurrection promised in the gospel is the highest possible gift, because, according to his system, it is the restoration of existence. But even those Socinians, who do not so far depart from the conclusions of sound philosophy as to believe that the phenomena of thought can be explained without supposing an immaterial principle in man, while they allow that this principle may survive the body, are inclined to compare the state in which it is left, after the dissolution of the body, to a kind of sleep, in which all the faculties of the soul continue suspended till the resurrection. Being led, by their system concerning the fall, to infer from the present appearance of death, that it is part of the original constitution of nature, and finding no reasoning in favour of a future state amongst those who had not the benefit of revelation, so clear and decisive as to satisfy a speculative mind, and no explicit promise in the law of Moses, they consider immortality as a free gift which the Almighty may have bestowed upon those who died in ancient times, but a gift, the assurance of which is conveyed to the human race solely by the religion of Christ. Here, therefore, the Socinians place the great value and importance of the

gospel. Whether man consists of spirit and body united in an inexplicable manner, or whether his whole frame be only an organization of matter more exquisite than any which he beholds, he cannot infer with certainty from any deductions of his own reason, that he shall survive that event, which, happening in the established course of nature, puts an end to all his labours and enjoyments upon earth. But the gospel brings life and immortality to light. While it declares that the God who made man is ready to forgive all his wanderings, and to receive him into favour upon his repentance, it promises to reward the obedience and virtues of this short life, by raising him from the sleep of death, by restoring to him at the resurrection, whatever had been his state in the intervening period, all those capacities which death seemed to have annihilated, and by introducing him to a life of endless and complete bliss.

This promise corresponds with that essential goodness of the Deity from which the declaration of pardon flows ; but it is infinitely beyond the deserts of a frail sinful creature : and, therefore, that it may take possession of the mind of man, that he may rest without hesitation in the certainty of the gift, and that he may derive all the comfort and improvement which the prospect is fitted to administer, it is necessary that every confirmation of the promise, every sensible proof which the nature of the case admits, should be given him. Now this sensible proof is afforded by means of the death of Jesus Christ ; and hence the great advantage which the world derives from that fact. A man, say the Socinians, not distinguished from his brethren in his origin or in the powers of his nature, having been employed by God to teach his will and to declare the promise of pardon and life eternal to those who repent, is exposed, in the execution of this commission, to sufferings more severe than those which fall to the lot of ordinary men ; he endures them with patience, and the virtues of his character are illustrated by his sorrows. But instead of being enabled to surmount them, he is delivered by God into the hands of his enemies, that being put to death by their malice, he might be raised by the power of the Creator. In three days he returns from the grave ; and the evidence of his resurrection is so remarkably circumstantial, that there is not, perhaps, says Dr. Priestley, any fact in ancient history so perfectly credible according to the established rules of evidence. But the resurrection of the man, who promised in the name of God that, at the last day, all shall rise, is a demonstration in his person that a general resurrection is possible ; it is an assurance from God of the fulfilment of the promise, the most level to the apprehensions of the generality of mankind, and it is connected with that glorious reward upon which the Scriptures say this man has already entered. For, whatever may be the state of other men till the general resurrection, we are told that this man has ascended to heaven, and is now invested with supreme dignity and bliss. His recompense is held forth in Scripture as the encouragement and the security to his disciples that they shall in due time receive theirs ; and the encouragement and security are founded upon this circumstance, that he was a man like them, who suffered and died. So speak the apostles ; “ if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus

will God bring with him.”* “Every man in his own order; Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s.”† And our Lord himself said to his apostles, “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations; and I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me.”‡ Socinus and his immediate followers admitted that power of Christ in dispensing the recompense of his disciples, which seems to be intimated in the last of these passages, and in such other expressions as these, his giving a crown of life, his granting to sit down with him on his throne, his raising the dead, and his judging the world. But the modern Socinians preserve the consistency of their scheme by giving figurative interpretations of all such phrases, and so resolving the accomplishment of that promise which proceeded from the love of God, purely into his power and will, without the interposition of any other being. Christ may be employed as an instrument of fulfilling the pleasure of the Almighty; but so may angels, so may virtuous men; and it is not from any inherent power that Christ possesses, but from that example of the truth of the promise, which Christians behold in his having been raised from the dead and set at God’s right hand, that they derive the full assurance of hope.

This system of pure Socinianism which I have now delineated, I shall state in a few sentences, gathered from Dr. Priestley’s History of the Doctrine of Atonement. “The great object of the mission and death of Christ was to give the fullest proof of a state of retribution, in order to supply the strongest motives to virtue; and the making an express regard to the doctrine of a resurrection to immortal life the principal sanction of the laws of virtue is an advantage peculiar to Christianity. By this peculiar advantage the gospel reforms the world, and remission of sin is consequent on reformation. For, although there are some texts in which the pardon of sin seems to be represented as dispensed in consideration of the sufferings, the merits, the resurrection, the life, or the obedience of Christ, we cannot but conclude, upon a careful examination, that all these views of it are partial representations, and that, according to the plain general tenor of Scripture, the pardon of sin is, in reality, always dispensed by the free mercy of God upon account of men’s personal virtue, a penitent upright heart, and a reformed exemplary life, without regard to the sufferings or merit of any being whatever.”

The Socinians endeavour to accommodate to this system all those expressions, which Christians have learned from Scripture to apply to the gospel remedy. The following instances may serve as a specimen of their mode of interpretation. Christ died for us, *i. e.* for our benefit, because we derive much advantage from his death. He is our mediator, because he came from God to us to declare the divine mercy. He saves his people from their sins, because the influence of his precepts and his example, supported by the hope of a future life which he has revealed, leads them from sin to the practice of righteousness. His blood cleanseth us from all sin, because, being shed in confirmation of his doctrine, and as a step to his resurrection, it fur-

* 1 Thess. iv. 14.

† 1 Cor. xv. 23.

‡ Luke xxii. 28, 29.

nishes the most powerful incentives to virtue ; and we have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, because we are led by the due consideration of his death and its consequences, to that repentance, which, under the merciful constitution of the divine government, always obtains forgiveness.

According to this system, then, Jesus Christ is a teacher of righteousness, the messenger of divine grace, the publisher of a future life, the bright example of every virtue, and the most illustrious pattern of its reward. As far as these expressions go, he is the Saviour and Redeemer of the world ; but it is not allowed that he did any thing further to merit this character. His religion is the most perfect system of morality, delivering with the authority of heaven a more plain, and complete, and spiritual rule of duty than is any where else to be found, and exciting men to follow that rule by hopes which no other teacher was commissioned to give. It is in these respects the most effectual lesson of righteousness which ever was addressed to the world ; and in this sense only it is a remedy for the present state of moral evil.

This system accords with all the principles held by those who are now called Socinians, and forms part of a great scheme, which, however blameworthy it may be in many respects, has the merit of being consistent. But to Christians who do not hold these principles in their full extent, it appears to labour under insuperable difficulties.

Those who believe in the pre-existence of Jesus, cannot consider his death as merely a natural event, like the death of any other man ; and they look for some purpose of his dying, beyond that of affording, by his resurrection, an example of a dead man brought to life, because Jesus, appearing to them in this respect essentially distinguished from all other men, that he existed before he was born, may be also distinguished in this further respect, that he returned to existence after he died. We know that some of the ancient philosophers were accustomed to argue for a future life from that state of pre-existence which they assigned to the soul ; and the inference is so natural and obvious, if the supposition upon which it proceeds is admitted, that, whether the Arian or Athanasian system be adopted with regard to the dignity which Jesus had before he was born, no argument, drawn from the death and resurrection of this singular personage, can be a sufficient warrant for ordinary men to expect that they also shall be raised. Those who have a strong apprehension of the evil of sin and of the authority of the divine government, and who observe, that even amongst men repentance does not always restore a person to the condition in which he was before he sinned, cannot readily admit that a simple declaration of forgiveness to all who return to their duty is consistent with the holiness and majesty of the Ruler of the universe ; more especially as this declaration does not barely remit the punishment of transgression, but is connected with a promise of eternal life ; a promise which other Christians consider as restoring what had been forfeited by Adam, which the Socinians consider as so peculiar to the gospel, that it gives to man a hope which he never had before, and which all acknowledge to contain a free inestimable gift. There appears to be an expediency in some testimony of the divine displeasure against sin, at the time of declar-

ing that such a gift is to be conferred upon penitents; and if there are in Scripture many intimations of such a testimony, they who are impressed with a sense that it is expedient will not be disposed to explain them away.

Those who form their system of theology upon the language of Scripture, do not find themselves warranted to sink Jesus to the office of a messenger of the divine mercy, when they recollect that he is said to have washed us from our sins in his own blood, and to have bought us with a price; that repentance and remission of sins are uniformly connected with something which he did; that according to his command they were preached by his apostles in his name, and that they are said to be granted by him. Different systems have been formed for explaining such expressions; but many Christian writers, who do not pretend to decide which of the systems is true, or whether it is becoming in us to form any system upon the subject at all, consider expressions of this kind as plainly teaching that the interposition of Christ was somehow efficacious in procuring the pardon of sin; and it appears to them that this efficacy, whatever be the nature of it, must go very far beyond the bare declaration of a proposition which was always true, that God is merciful.

All these reasons for rejecting the Socinian system are very much confirmed, by attending to the descriptions given in Scripture of the honour and power to which Jesus Christ is now exalted. Although the modern Socinians, feeling that these descriptions are inconsistent with their system, have attempted to resolve into mere figures of speech what Socinus himself interpreted literally, any Christian who reads the New Testament, not with a view to reconcile it to his own system, but in order to learn what it contains, cannot entertain a doubt that the person who appeared upon earth in a humble form, the Saviour of men, is now exalted as their Lord; that all power in heaven and in earth is committed to him; and that he is ordained of God to be the judge of the quick and the dead. But why is Jesus thus exalted? Although his being preserved from that sleep of the soul which some Christians have supposed, or his being raised out of the grave from that complete dissolution which Dr. Priestley's materialism teaches, may be useful to Christians as a living example of a resurrection, it cannot be said that his being advanced to the government of the universe is necessary to give us assurance of a future life. According to the Socinian system, we cannot discern in the services of this man any merit beyond that of other messengers of heaven, or even of his own apostles; and we do not perceive any purpose which is to be attained by his receiving a recompense so infinitely above his deserts. If the forgiveness of sin and the gift of immortality flow entirely from the mercy of God, without regard to any other being whatever, the security of them does not, in the smallest degree, depend upon the condition of the messenger by whom they were promised; so that the powers, which the Scriptures ascribe to that messenger, are a mere waste, and his exaltation, unlike any other work of God, is without meaning.

Such are the objections which Christians of different descriptions are led, by their principles, to urge against the Socinian system of redemption. Many able and serious men, who felt the force of these

objections, could not reconcile their minds to the third system, which they found to be the general faith of the Christian church ; and hence has arisen a middle system, which, as it is certainly clear of the objections that have now been stated, appears to some to comprehend the whole doctrine of Scripture upon this subject.

SECTION II.

THE middle system is founded upon a part of the doctrine of Socinus, which the modern Socinians have thrown out, viz : the power given by God to Jesus Christ after his resurrection. But many additions were made to this article in the course of the last century, and it has been spread out by several writers into a complete and beautiful system. My knowledge of it is derived from an Essay on Redemption, written by an English clergyman, John Balguy, and republished by Dr. Thomas Balguy ; from a book entitled Ben Mordecai's Apology for becoming a Christian, consisting of letters upon the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, written by Mr. Taylor, another English clergyman ; and from a volume of sermons published by Dr. Price, the celebrated English dissenter, who, rejecting both the Socinian and the Calvinistic systems, gives to this the name which I have borrowed from him, calling it the middle system. Availing myself of these sources of information, I shall give a short exposition of the middle system, which may enable you to form a conception of the manner in which the parts of it are linked together, and of the principles by which it is supported.

The fundamental principle of the middle system is, that under the government of a righteous God a distinction ought to be made between innocents and penitents. It is allowed that God, who is accountable to none, may freely forgive the sins of his creatures ; it is allowed that, being infinitely merciful, he has no delight in punishing them ; it is allowed that repentance, without which no sinner can be received, is a commendable disposition. But after all these things are granted to the Socinians, it is still conceived to be right in itself, that those, who have sinned, should not feel their situation in every respect the same as if they had uniformly obeyed the commands of their Creator ; and it is considered as a lesson which may be useful both to themselves and to other parts of the universe, that the restoration of the human race to the divine favour should be marked by some circumstances sufficient to preserve the memory of their transgression. It is observed that, in the course of human affairs, the effects of the vices of some are often repaired by the virtues of others, repaired not only to society, but to themselves. When they become sensible of their misconduct, they do not always find it possible by any personal effort to extricate themselves from all the evils in which they are involved, or to recover that place in society which they had forfeited ; but they are relieved by some generous interposition ; their professions of repentance are accepted at the intercession of a respectable friend, for the sake of something which had been done by another ; and their re-establishment in their former condition, which was not due

to themselves, thus becomes a part of the tribute paid by society to that uniform virtue, which is felt by all men to be worthy both of confidence and of reward. Upon this principle proceeded the pleading of Appius in his own defence: "Majorum merita," says Livy. "in rempublicam commemorabat, quo poenam deprecaretur."* In like manner Tacitus says, "Plautio mors remittitur ob patrum egregium meritum."† And Cicero, proceeding upon his knowledge and experience of the sentiments of mankind, delivers this general rule, "oportebit eum, qui sibi ut ignoscatur postulabit,—majorum suorum beneficia, si quæ extabunt, proferre."‡ So we read in the Old Testament that God was merciful to the children of Israel for Abraham's sake; § that he pardoned their idolatry at the intercession of Moses; || and that he accepted the prayer of his servant Job for the three friends, who had not spoken of him the thing that is right. ¶

These and other instances of the same kind in the history of Scripture, according with what we often behold amongst men, and corresponding also with our apprehension of the essential difference between the merit of those who have always obeyed, and of those who only repent of their sin, are considered in the middle system as an opening of the great scheme revealed in the gospel.

Jesus Christ, the first born of every creature, by whom God made the worlds, the purest and the most glorious being that ever proceeded from the Father of all, beheld the miserable condition of the human race, the forfeiture which they had incurred by the transgression of Adam, and the multiplied offences which they were daily committing against the majesty of heaven. Prompted by love to the souls of men, he left the bosom of the Father, laid aside the glories of his nature, and became a man of sorrows, that he might extricate from evil those whom he had made. All the scorn and persecution which he received while he went about doing good to men; all the amazement and agony which his pure spirit sustained amidst the iniquities of those with whom he dwelt: all the bitter sufferings which marked the end of his life upon earth, were the voluntary acts of a person who had devoted himself to the accomplishment of a most gracious purpose. They were accepted by God, who, not willing that any should perish, had given the Son of his love to be in this manner the deliverer of the human race; and they were rewarded by the powers conferred upon him after his resurrection. His reward added to the dignity of his character, by placing him at the head of the creation, and rendering the most exalted spirits subject to his dominion. But it was not the prospect of any increase of his personal glory which called forth his exertions. He had no need to be greater or happier than he was before he visited this earth; and he would not appear in a light so truly exalted, had he come here merely with the view of holding a higher place in heaven when he returned thither. The joy set before the Redeemer of the world, for which it is said he endured the cross, the recompense in the prospect of which he left the mansions of bliss, and drank the bitter cup given him by his Father, is to be gathered from such passages in the New Testament as the

* Liv. iii. 56.

† Tac. Ann. xi. 36.

‡ Cic. de Inv. ii. 35.

§ Ps. cv. 42, 43.

|| Exod. xxxii.

¶ Job xlii.

following: John v. 26, 27; vi. 39; xvii. 2. Acts v. 31. Heb. ii. 9, 10; v. 9.

The idea which is plainly expressed in some of these passages, and which appears to be implied in all of them, is this: that there was given to the Son of man, after his sufferings, the power of recovering a lost world, of removing all the evils which sin had introduced, of raising men from death, which is the punishment of sin, and of bringing those that repent to eternal life. All this is the reward of the services of the Redeemer; that is, although it redounds to the advantage of the penitents, it is not given to them as what they earn for themselves, but it is given to him as his recompense; and in this exalted sense are fulfilled the words which the evangelical prophet Isaiah introduced into his prediction of the sufferings of the Messiah: "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many."* Jesus Christ did see of the travail of his soul and was satisfied; in other words, he received his reward by justifying many.

The natural recompense of disinterested exertion, and the purest joy which a benevolent mind can taste, is an enlargement of the power of doing good. Feeble dependent creatures like us are glad to receive, as a reward of the good which we do from love unfeigned, an extension of the sphere of our private enjoyments, and an establishment of our own security. But he, who is styled in Scripture the Son of Man, and the brightness of his Father's glory, submitted to suffering purely for this purpose, that he might receive from his Father the right of communicating happiness; and the more complete and irretrievable on the part of man the forfeiture by sin had been, and the more extensive and precious the blessings which the Redeemer is empowered to convey, so much the more exquisite and glorious is his reward.

This system derives considerable support from its preserving that striking contrast between the first and the second Adam, which we found the Apostle Paul marking in the fifth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many shall be made righteous." The punishment of Adam is transmitted to those who do not sin after the similitude of his transgression. But the evils which flow from this constitution meet in the gospel with a remedy perfectly analogous to the disease; for the reward of Jesus Christ is communicated to those who are very unlike himself; and, according to the middle system, it is literally by his obedience that many are made righteous.

The middle system is further supported by its exhibiting, in a most pleasing and instructive light, that essential difference between those who have uniformly obeyed God, and those who only repent of their transgressions, which we expect to find under the government of God. That exalted Being, who, in making the worlds, fulfilled the commandment of God, and in whom the Father was always well pleased, by coming to this earth to do the will of God, had an opportunity of displaying before angels and men, in a degree more eminent than they had ever beheld, humility, obedience,

* Isaiah liii. 11.

resignation, patience, fortitude, generosity ; and in this transcendent excellence of virtue was crowned with a reward the most illustrious which the Father ever bestowed, and the most delightful to him upon whom it was conferred, the power of extricating the human race from all the evils which they had incurred by sin, and of restoring to them the gift of immortality which they had forfeited. In this method of saving sinners there is a continual memorial of the evil of sin, and a lesson to all the intelligent creation of God, that without some very singular interposition those who have sinned cannot obtain pardon. For, although the Son of God was connected with the human race from the time that by him God made the worlds, a much closer connexion was necessary in order to their being saved from sin ; and the constitution, by which penitents are received into the divine favour, is such as to make them feel a constant and an entire dependence upon their Redeemer. It is by his power that they are delivered from the effects of their transgression : the accomplishment of their salvation is premial to him, not to them, that is, all that they receive is given them, not upon their own account, but upon account of what he hath done. At the same time, this method of checking the presumption of sinners is a bright display of divine love. God the Father provides a method for receiving his returning children into his family ; and he rewards the generous exertion of his own Son, by opening the mansions of heaven to those whom his Son shall bring thither. In all the steps of their progress heavenward, they experience the grace of the Redeemer, and daily reap the fruit of his reward ; and when they shall at length enter the city of the living God, their numbers and their felicity will redound to his honour. “ These are they,” as one of the elders about the throne said to John in the Revelation, “ which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” “ They follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth ; and the new song that is sung by every creature in heaven has a peculiar significancy when it proceeds from their mouth, “ worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and honour, and glory, and blessing.”

Many of the passages of Scripture, which Christians are accustomed to apply to the remedy brought in the gospel, receive an interpretation at once more exalted and more natural from those who hold the middle system, than from those who hold the Socinian. According to the middle system, Jesus is said to be the propitiation for our sins, because by his meritorious obedience he hath procured our reconciliation with God. He is said to have given himself an offering and a sacrifice to God for us, because he devoted himself to death in order to accomplish our salvation. He is our mediator, because through him we have access to the Father. He is our advocate, who maketh intercession for us, because all that we ask, and all that we receive is for his sake, because nothing is due to us, but all that heaven can bestow is due to the perfection of his obedience ; and we are saved by him, because with the same grace which led him to suffer for our sakes, he imparts, to those who repent, the gifts which he hath received from his Father, accounting their salvation his reward. A system, which gives such views of our dependence upon our Redeemer, follows out those lessons of humility by which the gospel has for ever excluded

the presumption of sinners, and the boasting of those who are saved, and it may be regarded as a commentary upon these words of the apostle, "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's;"* and upon the words of our Lord himself, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."†

The middle system, which I have now delineated, has the merit of being beautiful and consistent. As far as it goes, it proceeds, in a great measure, upon the language and the views of the New Testament. It appears to unite, in the pardon of those who repent, the rectitude which becomes the Judge of the universe, with that compassion which we feel ourselves so willing to ascribe to the Deity. It gives penitents all that security for being restored to the divine favour, and for obtaining the reward of eternal life, which can arise from the power of their Redeemer; and it seems so peculiarly calculated to illustrate his glory, that, in the affectionate admiration with which it is natural for Christians to regard him, the heart inclines the understanding to receive it as the whole truth.

But there are two objections to this system, which, with a great part of the Christian world, are sufficient to counterbalance these advantages, so far as to satisfy them, that although a great part of this system may be true, it is not a complete account of the gospel remedy.

The first objection is, that the middle system plainly involves in it the Arian opinion concerning the person of Christ. It presents to our view, a being, who, by performing a hard service in the government of God, acquires new powers, and is advanced to a degree of supremacy and a capacity of conferring happiness, which he did not formerly possess. But this view of Christ is totally inconsistent with the Athanasian system. Those, who believe that Jesus Christ is truly and essentially God, think that they are naturally led, by the manner in which his exaltation is spoken of in Scripture, to consider it as part of the *οικονομία* there revealed, a manifestation of the Son of God, an investiture of the same person in his human nature with that glory which he had from eternity in his divine. But they cannot believe that he became, by suffering, more able to save than he was before. They are compelled, by their creed, to remove from their conceptions of him all those ideas of dependence and changeableness which are necessarily implied in an enlargement of powers; and they cannot degrade him whom they worship as God, equal with the Father, to a rank with those inferior spirits, who, by progressive improvements in goodness, may become worthy of holding more conspicuous stations, and of being appointed to more important offices in the administration of the universe.

The second objection to the middle system is, that although a beautiful and plausible theory, yet, like many other theories, it proceeds upon a partial view of facts. It is the theory of men who are satisfied that the Socinian scheme is indefensible, but who are at the same time solicitous to avoid those particular determinate views of the sufferings of Christ, which other Christians derive from a literal interpretation

* 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

† Rev. iii. 21.

of Scripture. Hence they are obliged to have recourse to such views as are vague and general. They studiously throw into the shade many parts of that information which the Scriptures have been generally supposed to convey ; and they hope, by the splendid parts of their theory, to occupy and please the mind, so that the defect shall not be felt. Accordingly it will be observed, that while the power, which the Redeemer is supposed to have acquired by his sufferings, stands forth in this theory a luminous object, no specific reason is assigned for the sufferings. They are a display of benevolence, a virtuous exertion on the part of the Redeemer, and the reward of them redounds in the most effectual manner to the benefit of the human race. But we do not see, by this theory, any thing in the sufferings peculiarly applicable to the situation of those who are redeemed. Exertions of another kind might have merited the same reward ; and we feel ourselves at a loss to account for the fitness of many things which he endured, and for a great part of that language in which the Scriptures speak of his sufferings.

SECTION III.

THE two preceding schemes concerning the nature of the Gospel remedy are the invention of modern times. What I called the Catholic opinion upon this subject appears to have been derived from the Scriptures by the earliest Christian writers ; it has been generally held in the Christian world ; and it enters into the creed of the two established churches of this island. The church of England concludes the second article, which is a description of the Son of God, with these words, “ who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.” And the same opinion is more fully expressed in the prayer of consecration which forms part of the communion service, “ Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who of thy tender mercy didst give thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, who made there, by his one oblation of himself once offered, a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.” The words of our Confession of Faith, chap. viii. 5, are these, “ The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he, through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the Justice of his Father ; and purchased not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for all those whom the Father hath given unto him.” It is the first part of this paragraph which is peculiar to the Catholic opinion ; for those who hold the middle system also say that by the merit of Christ’s obedience, they who repent shall receive the reward of eternal life ; and therefore they need not scruple to say that he purchased an everlasting inheritance for them. But they do not admit that he hath fully satisfied the justice of the Father, by his sacrifice of himself offered up unto God : and this is the point in which they unite with the Socinians. This distinguishing part of the Catholic opinion is known by

the name of the doctrine of the atonement, or the satisfaction of Christ. The subject is in itself so important, it has received such ample and acute discussion from the times of Socinus to the present day, and the points in controversy enter so much into all the discourses and offices of the ministers of the Gospel, that I should fail in my duty if I did not speak of it fully. A much shorter illustration will suffice for the other part of the Catholic opinion,—the manner in which those who hold it connect the promise and the hope of life everlasting with the obedience of Jesus Christ.

The doctrine of the atonement or satisfaction of Christ is not necessarily connected with a belief in his divinity; for this doctrine was ably defended by Dr. Clarke, and it is held by many who avow that they do not consider the Son as truly God. But it is impossible for any one, who believes that Jesus Christ is a mere man, to entertain such an opinion of the value of his sufferings, as to think that they could be a sacrifice for the sins of the world, and a satisfaction to the justice of God. A denial, therefore, of the pre-existence of our Saviour, and a denial of the doctrine of satisfaction, are the two leading features of Socinianism, and they necessarily go together; whereas all, as far as I know, without exception, who believe in the Trinity, and a part of those who consider Jesus as the most exalted creature of God, embrace that part of the catholic opinion which we are now to state, that is to say, they believe that as this glorious person could not suffer in the form of God, he was made in the likeness of men, and dwelt amongst us in the body prepared for him, for this purpose chiefly, that he might suffer for the sins of men; that the sorrows of his life, the agony of his last hours, and the bitterness of his death, were the punishment due to our transgressions, which it pleased the Father to lay upon him, and which he cheerfully undertook; and that the sins of those who repent and believe are forgiven upon account of this substitution of Jesus Christ in their stead, which is called his vicarious suffering.

It is well known, that the general strain of Scripture favours this opinion; for we meet with numberless expressions of this kind. “Christ was delivered for our offences; he suffered for sins the just for the unjust; by his stripes we are healed; he hath made peace by the blood of his cross—he hath given himself for us an offering, and a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour.” But it is not by a bare enumeration of such texts, than which there is nothing more easy, that the Catholic opinion is to be established. For those who oppose it do not deny that it appears to be favoured by the language of Scripture. But they maintain that it is liable to so many objections, and in particular is so contrary to the moral attributes of the Deity, that it cannot be true, and that they would not believe it even although it were taught in Scripture more plainly than it is: and they say further, that this opinion, though apparently favoured by Scripture, is not necessarily implied in the language there used, that the phrases employed by those who hold it, viz. vindictive justice, vicarious suffering, substitution, and satisfaction, are of human invention, and that the expressions in Scripture which have been conceived to warrant such phrases admit of a milder interpretation.

This being the manner in which the Catholic opinion is combated,

those who defend it have to show, in the first place, that it is not irrational or unjust; for, if it were, it could not form, as they say it does, the most important article in the Christian revelation; and in the second place, after they have fairly stated and vindicated their opinion, it remains for them to show that it is unquestionably the doctrine of Scripture, that the views there given of the method of our redemption by the sufferings of Christ, correspond with the language which they employ in stating their opinion, and with the principles upon which they rest the vindication of it. I shall follow this natural division of the defence of the doctrine of the atonement; and I think that I shall thus be able to furnish you with a complete view of the kind of argument employed to prove that it is agreeable to reason, and that it is taught by Scripture.

CHAPTER III.

DOCTRINE OF THE ATONEMENT.

THE first thing necessary for those who defend the Catholic opinion, respecting the gospel remedy, is to show that it may be stated in such a manner as not to appear irrational or unjust. The objections urged against it are of a very formidable kind. Christians who hold other systems concerning the gospel remedy unite with the enemies of revelation in misrepresenting this doctrine; and if you form your notion of it from the accounts commonly given by either of these classes of writers, you will perhaps be disposed to agree with Socinus in thinking, that whether it be contained in the Scriptures or not it cannot be true. It has been said that this doctrine represents the Almighty as moved with fury at the insults offered to his Supreme Majesty, as impatient to pour forth his fury upon some being, as indifferent whether that being deserves it or not, and as perfectly appeased upon finding an object of vengeance in his own innocent Son. It has been said that a doctrine which represents the Almighty as sternly demanding a full equivalent for that which was due to him, and as receiving that equivalent in the sufferings of his Son, transfers all the affection and gratitude of the human race, from an inexorable being who did not remit any part of his right, to another being who satisfied his claim. It has been said that a translation of guilt is impossible, because guilt is personal, and that a doctrine, which represents the innocent as punished instead of the guilty, and the guilty as escaping by this punishment, contradicts the first principles of justice, subverts all our ideas of a righteous government, and, by holding forth an example of reward and punishment dispensed by heaven without any regard to the character of those who receive them, does, in fact, encourage men to live as they please.

These objections are the more formidable, that they have received no small countenance from the language of many of the most zealous friends of this doctrine. The atonement presents a subject of speculation most interesting to the great body of the people, who are always incapable of metaphysical precision of thought; it enters into loose and popular harangues delivered by many who are more accustomed to speak than to think; and the manner of stating it has been too often accommodated to prejudices which are inconsistent with truth, and adverse to morality. It is not surprising that, in such circumstances, the mistakes of the friends of this doctrine have given much advantage to the misrepresentation of its enemies; and it is upon this account very necessary for you, the great object of whose

study is to acquire just and enlarged apprehensions of the whole scheme of Christian doctrine, that you may be able to defend that truth which you understand, to beware of forming your notions of this capital article of our faith from the incorrect superficial statements of it which may come in your way.

Happily for your instruction, the objections to this doctrine have called forth some of the greatest masters of reason in its defence. Grotius, whose comprehensive vigorous mind was illuminated by an intimate acquaintance with jurisprudence, wrote, in answer to Socinus, a treatise, *De Satisfactione Christi*, which is both a fair exposition and a complete vindication of the doctrine; and the reply published by Crellius, an adherent of Socinus, was answered in the end of the seventeenth century by the learned and able Bishop Stillingfleet, who, in his discourse on the sufferings of Christ, has unfolded and illustrated the leading principles laid down by Grotius, and by applying them to the acute reasonings of Crellius, has shown how ready a solution they afford of every objection. Dr. Clarke, with that accuracy of thought and that precision of language which are his characteristics, has explained within a short compass, in a sermon upon the nature of the sufferings of Christ, and elsewhere occasionally, the true principles of this doctrine. The general circulation of Dr. Clarke's works has rendered these principles familiar to many, who have not leisure to study the more elaborate treatises of Grotius and Stillingfleet; they are now pretty generally understood, and you will find them spread out, and applied with much propriety to the form in which some modern writers have brought forward the ancient objections, in two treatises published not many years ago, the one entitled, *Jesus Christ the Mediator between God and Man*, by Tomkins; the other, *Vicarious Sacrifice*, by Elliot.

Availing myself of these helps, I shall now proceed to state that precise notion of the doctrine of the atonement, upon which the reasonableness of it is rested by those who know best how to defend it. This fair statement of the Catholic opinion will involve in it an answer to the objections which I mentioned, and will prepare us for discovering, by a critical examination of various passages of Scripture, the evidence that it is there taught, and the views of it which are there given.

SECTION I.

THE first principle upon which a fair statement of the doctrine of the atonement proceeds is this, that sin is a violation of law, and that the almighty, in requiring an atonement in order to the pardon of sin, acts as the supreme lawgiver. So important is this principle, that all the objections to the doctrine proceed upon other views of sin, which to a certain extent, appear to be just, but which cannot be admitted to be complete without acknowledging that it is impossible to answer the objections. Thus, if you consider sin as merely an insult to the majesty of heaven, God the Father as the person offended by this insult, and that wrath of God, of which the Scriptures speak, as

something analagous to the emotion of anger excited in our breasts by the petulance of our neighbours, it would seem, according to the notions which we entertain, more generous to lay aside this wrath, and to accept of an acknowledgment of the offence, than to demand reparation of the insult ; and it may be thought that the Almighty, in requiring another to suffer before an offence which is personal to himself can be forgiven, discovers a jealousy of his own dignity unbecoming that supreme majesty, which is incapable of being tarnished by the conduct of his creatures. In like manner, if, because our Lord sometimes calls trespasses by the name of debts, we stretch the comparison so far as to make it a complete description of sin, if, following out the similitude, we consider the Almighty as a creditor to whom the sinner has contracted a debt, and forgiveness as the remission of that debt which would have been paid by the punishment of the sinner, there does not occur from this description any reason why the Almighty may not as freely forgive the sins of his creatures, as a creditor may remit what is due to himself ; and, therefore, when, instead of doing so, he requires payment of the debt by the sufferings of his Son, he appears in the light of a rigorous creditor, who, having insisted upon his own, although the person originally bound was not able to pay, receives it from a surety, so that all that grace of God in the forgiveness of sin, which the Scriptures extol, is without meaning, for when the debt is paid, the liberation of the debtor is a matter of right, not of favour. Further, if the intrinsic evil of sin is the only thing attended to, and the sinner be considered in no other light than as a reasonable creature who has deformed his nature, and whose character has become odious, it may be thought that repentance is the proper remedy of this evil. Men, not being qualified to judge of the sincerity of those who profess sorrow for their past trespasses, would act unwisely if they pardoned every person who appears to be penitent ; but it is impossible that the Supreme Being can be mistaken in judging of the hearts of men ; and, therefore, if the hatefulness of their conduct be the only cause of alienation, whenever he discerns in them the marks of true reformation, that cause no longer exists, and the sinner, by a real change upon his character, returns into favour with his Creator. According to this view of the matter, all that is necessary for dispensing forgiveness is an effectual method of promoting reformation ; and the Socinians appear to give a complete account of the gospel of Christ, when they say that it saves us from our sins by leading us to forsake them.

Thus many of the principal objections against the doctrine of atonement remain without an answer, when we confine our notions of sin to these three views of it. But although it be true that sin is an insult to the majesty of heaven, by which the Supreme Being is offended, that it is in some sense a debt to the Creator, and that it cannot be beheld by a pure spirit without the highest disapprobation, there is a further view of it not directly included under any of these ; and all the objections which I mentioned arise from the stopping short at some one of these views, or at least employing the language peculiar to them, without going on to state this further view, that sin is a violation of the law given by the Supreme Being. But it is under the character of a lawgiver that the Almighty is to be regarded both in

punishing and in forgiving the sins of men. For although by creation he is the absolute lord and proprietor of all, who may without challenge or control dispose of every part of his works in what manner he pleases, he does not exercise this right of sovereignty in the government of his reasonable creatures, but he has made known to them certain laws, which express what he would have them to do, and he has annexed to these laws certain sanctions which declare the rewards of obedience, and the consequences of transgression. It is this which constitutes what we call the moral government of God, of which all those actions of the Almighty, that respect what is right or wrong in the conduct of his reasonable creatures, form a part, and under which every man feels that he lives. For although this moral government be administered with very unequal measures of instruction to the subjects, there is no situation in which the human race have the use of their faculties, without recognising in one degree or other the law of their nature; and whether this knowledge be derived from sentiment, or reason, or tradition, or written revelation, every thing which to them is sin may with accuracy be defined the transgression of a law.

If the Almighty, then, is to be regarded as a lawgiver, we must endeavour to rise to the most exalted conceptions which we are able to form of the plan of his moral government; and for this purpose it is necessary that we should abstract from every kind of weakness which is incident to the administration of human governments, and lay hold of those principles and maxims which reason and experience teach us to consider as essential to a good government, and without which it does not appear to us that that expression has any meaning.

Now it is the first principle of every good government, that laws are enacted for the benefit of the community. The happiness of the whole body depends upon their being observed, for they would not have been enacted, if the observance of them had been a matter of indifference to the public. Hence every person who violates the laws, besides the disrespect which he shows to that authority by which they were enacted, besides the hurt which individuals may sustain by his action, does an injury to the public, because he disturbs that order and security which the laws establish. It is therefore essential to the excellence of government, that there succeeds, immediately after disobedience, what is called guilt, *i. e.* the desert of punishment, an obligation to suffer that which the law prescribes. Accordingly in the code of laws of many northern nations, who were accustomed to estimate all crimes at certain rates, a murderer not only paid a sum to the relations of the deceased, as a compensation for their loss, but he paid a sum to the king for the breach of the peace.* And in all countries, that which is properly called punishment does not mean the putting the rights of a private party, who may have been immediately injured, in the same state in which they were before the trespass was committed, but it means the reparation made to the public by the suffering of the criminal, for the disorder arising from his breach of the laws. The law generally defines what the measure of this suffering shall be, and it is applied to particular cases by

* Tac. Germ. xii.

criminal judges, who, being only interpreters of the law, have no power to remit the punishment. It is true that in most human governments a power is lodged somewhere of granting pardon, because from the imperfection which necessarily adheres to them, it may often be inexpedient or even unjust, that a person who has been legally condemned should suffer; and there are times when the legislature sees meet to pass acts of indemnity. But it is only in very particular circumstances that the safety of the state admits the escape of a criminal; and in most cases the supreme authority proceeds, not with wrath, but from a calm and fixed regard to the essential interests of the community, to deter other subjects from violating the laws, by exhibiting to their view punishment as the consequence of transgression.

If we apply these maxims and principles, which appear to us implied in the very nature of good government, we shall find it impossible to conceive of God as a lawgiver, without thinking it essential to his character to punish transgression; and the perfection of his government, far from superseding this exercise of that character, seems to render it the more becoming and the more indispensable. It is not that the wickedness of men can hurt him, that his throne is in any danger of being shaken by their combinations, or that his treasures may be exhausted if his subjects do not pay what they owe him; it is not from any such emotion as personal injury excites in our breast; but it is because his laws are founded in the essential difference between good and evil; because they are adapted with wisdom and goodness to the circumstances of those to whom they are given, and because the happiness of the whole rational creation depends upon the observance of them, that guilt under the divine government is followed by punishment. Hence you will observe that what divines call vindictive or punitive justice, far from deserving the opprobrious epithets with which it has been often loaded by hasty and superficial writers, belongs to the character of the Ruler of the universe, as much as any other attribute of the divine nature. For if the goodness of the lawgiver, and the excellence of his laws, do not lead men to observe them, it remains for him to vindicate their authority, and to preserve that order for the sake of which they were given, by employing the punishment of transgression as the mean of preventing the repetition of it.

This mean is employed according to the natural course when the sinner bears the punishment of his own transgression; and he can have no title to complain, although he endures the whole of that suffering which the law prescribes. In human governments, those who execute the laws seldom have much liberty of choice in the exercise of punitive justice, because they are either merely the interpreters of law, or are accountable to some higher authority; and even when they feel no such external restraint, their imperfect knowledge of the effects of their own decisions makes it appear to them safer and wiser to follow the established course. But the Almighty, who has an entire comprehension of the whole circumstances of every case, may perceive that different manners of exercising punitive justice are equally well calculated to attain the ends of punishment. As he giveth not account of his matters, he cannot be restrained by any cir-

cumstance foreign to himself from adopting that manner which appears to him best suited to the circumstances of the case; and even our understandings can discern in the situation of a guilty world the strongest reasons for departing from that method of exercising punitive justice, which lays the whole punishment of transgression upon the transgressor. For if all men are sinners, and if death, which is declared to be the punishment of sin, cannot possibly mean that those who die for their sins shall be happy hereafter, but must include the dissolution or the future misery of the sinner, it is manifest that the Supreme Lawgiver, by exercising punitive justice in this manner, would have put an end to the existence of the human race, or rendered them for ever wretched; and therefore, if there is any manner by which the ends of punitive justice can be attained in a consistency with the salvation of the human race, it appears to us, judging *a priori*, that it is becoming the Almighty to adopt this manner, because in so doing he acts both as the Lawgiver of the universe, and as the Father of mankind.

In the substitution of Jesus Christ, according to the Catholic opinion, there is a translation of the guilt of the sinners to him, by which is not meant that he who was innocent became a sinner, but that what he suffered was upon account of sin. To perceive the reason for adopting this expression, you must carry in your minds a precise notion of the meaning of the three words, sin, guilt, and punishment. Sin is the violation of law; guilt is the desert of punishment which succeeds this violation; and punishment is the suffering in consequence of this desert. When you separate suffering from guilt, it ceases to be punishment, and becomes mere calamity or affliction; and although the Almighty may be conceived, by his sovereign dominion, to have the right of laying any measure of suffering upon any being, yet suffering, even when inflicted by heaven, unless it is connected with guilt, does not attain the ends of punishment. In order, therefore, that the sufferings of the Son of God might be such as it became the Lawgiver of the universe to inflict, it was necessary that the sufferer, who had no sin of his own, should be considered and declared as taking upon him that obligation to punishment which the human race had incurred by their sins. Then his sufferings became punishment, not indeed deserved by sins of his own, but due to him as bearing the sins of others.

Although the sufferings of Jesus Christ, in consequence of this translation of guilt, became the punishment of sin, it is plain that they are not that very punishment which the sins deserved; and hence it is that they are called by those who hold the Catholic opinion, a satisfaction for the sins of the world. The word satisfaction is known in the Roman law, from which it is borrowed, to denote that method of fulfilling an obligation which may either be admitted or refused. When a person, by the non-performance of a contract, has incurred a penalty, he is entitled to a discharge of the contract, if he pays the penalty; but if, instead of paying the penalty itself, he offers something in place of it, the person who has a right to demand the penalty, may grant a discharge or not, as he sees meet. If he is satisfied with that which is offered, he will grant the discharge; if he is not satisfied, he cannot be called unjust; he may act wisely in refusing it.

According to this known meaning of the word, the sufferings of Christ for sin have received the name of a satisfaction to the justice of God, because they were not the penalty that had been incurred, but were something accepted by the Lawgiver instead of it. It appears even to us inconsistent with the character of the Lawgiver of the universe, and many reasons in his universal government, which we are not qualified to perceive, may have rendered it in the highest degree unfit, that an act of indemnity, by which the sins of all that repent and believe are forgiven, should be published to the human race without some awful example of the punishment of transgression. It pleased God to exhibit his example in the sufferings of his own Son. By declaring that the iniquities of the whole world were laid upon this person, he transferred to him the guilt of mankind, and thus showed them, at the very time when their sins are forgiven, that no transgression of his law can escape with impunity.

It follows from the account which has been given of a satisfaction for sin, that it cannot procure the pardon of the sinner without the good will of the lawgiver, because it offers something in place of that which he was entitled to demand; and for this reason the Catholic opinion concerning the nature of the remedy brought in the gospel, far from excluding, will be found, when rightly understood, to magnify the mercy of the Lawgiver. Those, who know best how to defend it, never speak of any contest between the justice and the mercy of God, because they believe that there is the most perfect harmony amongst all the divine perfections: they never think so unworthily of God as to conceive that his fury was appeased by the interposition of Jesus Christ; but they uniformly represent the scheme of our redemption as originating in the love of God the Father, who both provided and accepted that substitution, by which sinners are saved; and they hold that the forgiveness of sins is free, because although granted upon that consideration which the Lawgiver saw meet to exact, it was given to those who had no right to expect it, and who could have fulfilled their obligation to punishment only by their destruction, or their eternal misery.

One essential point in the statement of the Catholic opinion yet remains. Allowing that it became the Ruler of the universe to exhibit the righteousness of his government, by punishing transgression at the time when remission of sins was preached in the gospel, and that we are thus able to assign the reason of that translation of guilt, without which a guilty world could not be saved, it may still be inquired upon what principle an innocent person was made to suffer this punishment: and it is one part of the objections to the Catholic opinion, that no reason of expediency, not even mercy to the human race, can render it right or fit, that he who had done no sin should be punished as a sinner. When the Socinians are asked in what manner they can account for the sufferings of Jesus Christ, who, even in the judgment of those who lower his character to that of a peaceable mortal, must be allowed to have suffered more, although he sinned less, than other men, they resolve them into an act of dominion in the Creator, the same kind of sovereignty by which he often sends the heaviest afflictions upon the worthiest persons, and, disposing of his creatures at his pleasure, brings good out of evil. But this is an account to

which those who hold the Catholic opinion cannot have recourse, because their whole system proceeds upon this principle, that the Almighty is to be considered, in every part of this transaction, not as an absolute proprietor, who does what he will with his own, but as a righteous governor, who derives the reasons of his conduct from the laws which constitute his government. In the Catholic opinion, therefore, the consent of him who endured the sufferings is conjoined with the act of the Lawgiver, who accepted them as a satisfaction for sin ; and it is by the conjunction of these two circumstances, the consent of the sufferer and the acceptance of the Lawgiver, that the sufferings of Christ are essentially distinguished from all other instances of vicarious punishment.

The ordinary course of human affairs, and the Scripture history, furnish many cases in which persons suffer for the sins of others. It is part of the positive laws of many states, and of the general constitution of nature, that the effects of transgression extend beyond the lives and fortunes of those by whom it was committed, and that children, subjects, or other connexions thus endure a larger portion of evil than it is likely they would have endured had it not been for the sins of those who went before them. You will find cases of this kind brought forward, and very much dwelt upon, even in the most masterly vindications of the Catholic opinion ; but I own it appears to me, that the principles upon which the Catholic opinion is defended destroy every kind of similarity between these cases and the sufferings of Christ. In all such instances of the extension of punishment, persons suffer for sins, of which they are innocent, without their consent, in consequence of a constitution under which they are born, and by a disposition of events which they probably lament ; and their suffering is not supposed to have any effect in alleviating the evils incurred by those whose punishment they bear. The constitution by which punishment is thus extended has a striking similarity to the effects produced by the fall of Adam upon his posterity. It suggests a general analogy by which the second or the fourth opinion upon that subject may be vindicated ; but it is wholly inapplicable to the sufferings which procured the remedy. Cases which appear to be more similar are those in which parents or friends, from affection and choice, submit to much labour and pain, by which they are able to mitigate the afflictions of others, and often to extricate them from danger or sorrow. Such cases intimate, as has been well said by Bishop Butler, that the general constitution of the universe is merciful, *i. e.* that evils, however deserved, are not left without remedy ; and the generosity and willingness which brings the remedy, have been considered as suggesting an analogy favourable to that which I call the Middle opinion. But all such cases fall very far short of the Catholic opinion. For although persons in certain situations may conceive it to be their duty, or may feel an inclination to make an exertion of benevolence painful to themselves, and profitable to others ; and although the enthusiasm of affection has sometimes produced a wish to bear for others all that they had deserved, yet, from the nature of the thing, there cannot be in such cases a legal substitution. No person is entitled to give a formal consent that his life shall be taken by God in place of that of another, because his own is

entirely at the disposal of his Creator ; and it would be presumptuous in him to offer to the Almighty to suffer the punishment of another man's sins, for every man has to bear his own iniquity, and every man may know, that if God were to enter into judgment with him, this is a load more than sufficient for him.

When you turn to human judgments, you will find nothing exactly similar to what is called a satisfaction for sin by the sufferings of Christ ; and a little attention will satisfy you that the dissimilarity is not accidental, but is founded on the nature of things. In those cases in which the penalty incurred by breach of contract is a sum of money, or a prestation that may be performed by any one, he who pays the sum, or does the service for the person originally bound, undergoes what may properly be called vicarious punishment ; but he cannot be said to make satisfaction, because he does the very thing which was required, and the liberation of the pannel becomes, in consequence, of such substitution, a matter of right, not of favour. In those cases in which the penalty incurred is a punishment that attaches to the person of the pannel, as imprisonment, banishment, stripes, or death, human law does not admit of substitution, because in all such cases there cannot be that concurrence of the acceptance of the law-giver, and the valid consent of the substitute, without which substitution is illegal. Corporal chastisement and imprisonment for a limited time are intended not only as examples to others, but as a method of reforming the vices of the criminal,—they are a medicine which must be administered, not to another, but to the patient. Perpetual imprisonment, banishment, and death, are inflicted upon those whom the law considers as incorrigible ; and besides being examples, are intended to prevent the danger of any further harm being done to the community by the persons who are thus punished. But if another were punished in their stead, the danger would still exist ; at least it is impossible for human government to judge how far the lesson administered by the punishment of another would correct the vice of those who deserved to have suffered it.

There was a circumstance in the practice of ancient nations, which may appear to furnish an exception to these remarks ; for it is known that, in the intercourse of states, hostages were often given as a security that a treaty should be fulfilled ; and that in private causes, persons called *ἀρτιψύχοι* pledged their own lives for the lives of those who had been convicted of a capital crime. If the nation did not fulfil the contract, the hostage was put to death ;—if the criminal did not appear, the surety was executed. But there are two essential points of dissimilarity between these cases and the subject of which we are now speaking. The first is, that neither the nation nor the criminal was liberated by this vicarious suffering. The criminal was amenable to the sentence of the law, whenever he was apprehended, although the *ἀρτιψύχος* had suffered ; and the nation was considered as having broken the treaty, although it had sacrificed its citizen. And thus in the sufferings inflicted upon hostages and sureties, there was not that translation of guilt by which the punishment of one person takes away the obligation of another to suffer punishment. But the second point of dissimilarity is still more essential. Supposing it had been understood as a part of the law of nations, that the punishment

of a hostage cancelled the obligation of a treaty; supposing it had been part of the criminal jurisprudence of any country, that one subject might be carried forth to execution in place of another who had been condemned to die, still such substitution would have been unjust: it might have expressed the sentiments of those times with regard to vicarious punishment, but it could not have reconciled that punishment with the eternal law of righteousness, because no man is entitled to consent that his life shall be given in place of the life of another. He has power to dispose of his goods and of his labour, in any way that is not contrary to the laws of God, or the regulations of the community under whose protection he lives; but he has not power to dispose of his life, which he received from his Creator, which he is bound to preserve during the pleasure of him who gave it, and of the improvement of which he has to render an account. A man, indeed, is often called to expose his life to danger in the discharge of his duty; and it is not the part either of a man or of a Christian to value life so much as, for the sake of preserving it, to decline doing what he ought to do. But that he may be warranted to make a sacrifice inconsistent with the first law of his nature, the law of self-preservation, it should be clearly marked out to him to be his duty, by circumstances not of his own choosing. It is true also, that the first principles of social union give the rulers of the state a right to call forth the subjects in the most hazardous services, because a nation cannot exist unless it be defended by the members. But if, in consequence of this connexion with the community, a good citizen should not feel himself at liberty to decline when he is sent as an hostage, and if he should be put to death because the nation from which he came did not fulfil the treaty, the illegality of the substitution would only be transferred from the individual who did his duty in obeying, to the community who took the life of a subject, not to defend the state, but to leave the state at liberty to break its faith. To the *ἀντιλήψεις* of the ancients there was not the apology of a public order. Theirs was a private act, proceeding often, it may be, from the most laudable sentiments, but exceeding the powers given to man, and upon that account invalid.

The purpose of this long deduction was to account for what might at first sight appear an objection to the Catholic opinion, that of all the instances commonly alleged as similar, there are none which can properly be called a satisfaction by vicarious punishment; and the amount of the deduction is this: The imperfect knowledge, which every human lawgiver has of the circumstances of the case, disqualifies him from judging how far the ends of punishment may be attained by substitution, so that it is wiser for him to follow the established course of justice which lays the punishment upon the transgressor: and in capital punishments the law of nature forbids substitution: because no warmth of affection, and no apprehension of utility, warrant a man voluntarily to sacrifice that life which is the gift of God to him, merely that another who deserved to die might live. For these reasons I said, that in every thing which seems to approach to a substitution amongst men, there is wanting that concurrence of the acceptance of the lawgiver, and the consent of the substitute, without which substitution is illegal. But these two circumstances meet in

the substitution of Christ; and it is this peculiar concurrence which forms the complete vindication of the Catholic opinion.

Jesus Christ was capable of giving his consent to suffer and to die for the sins of men, because he had that power over his life which a mere man cannot have. Death did not come upon him by the condition of his being; but having existed from all ages in the form of God, he assumed, at a particular season, the fashion of a man, for this very cause that he might suffer and die. All the parts of his sufferings were known to him before he visited this world; he saw the consequences of them both to mankind and to himself; and, with every circumstance fully in his view, he said unto his Father, as it is written in the volume of God's book concerning him, "Lo! I come to do thy will, O God!"* His own words mark most explicitly that he had that power over his life which a mere man has not; "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself: I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again;"† and upon this power, peculiar to Jesus, depends the significance of that expression which his Apostles use concerning him, "he gave himself for us," *i. e.* with a valid deliberate consent he acted in all that he suffered as our substitute.

It affords a favourable view of the consistency of the Catholic opinion, that the very same dignity of character, which qualified the substitute to give his consent, implies the strongest reasons for the acceptance of the Lawgiver,—the other circumstance which must concur in order to render vicarious suffering a satisfaction to justice. The support, which the human nature of Jesus received from his divine, enabled him to sustain that wrath which the Lawgiver saw meet to lay upon a person who was bearing the sins of the world. The exalted character of the sufferer exhibited to the rational creation the evil and heinousness of sin, which the Supreme Lawgiver did not choose to forgive without such a substitution; and the love of God to the human race, which led him to accept of the sufferings of a substitute, was illustrated in the most striking manner, by his not sparing for such a purpose a person so dear to him as his own Son.

These grounds of the reasonableness of the Catholic opinion, which we deduce from the character of the substitute, have no necessary connexion with some assertions which occur in many theological books. It has been said, that our sins, being committed against the infinite majesty of Heaven, deserved an infinite punishment; that none but an infinite person could pay an equivalent, and therefore that God could not pardon sin without the sufferings of his Son. This manner of speaking, which pretends to balance one infinite against another, must be unintelligible to finite minds; and as far as it can be understood, it appears to be unjustifiable; because it ill becomes creatures whose sphere of observation is so narrow, and whose faculties are so weak as ours, to say what God could do, or what he could not do. It has also been said, that such was the value of the sufferings of Christ, that one drop of his blood was sufficient to wash away the sins of the world. This is a manner of speaking which appears to be both presumptuous and false; because, under the

* Heb. x. 7.

† John x. 18.

semblance of magnifying the Redeemer, it ascribes cruelty and injustice to the Father in the measure of suffering which he laid upon his Son. Neither are we warranted to say, that the purpose of making an atonement for the sins of men contains the whole account of the sufferings of Christ; because there may be in this transaction what the Scriptures call a manifold wisdom to us unsearchable; reasons founded upon relations to other parts of the universe, and upon the general plan of the divine government, which we have not at present the capacity of apprehending. It is of great importance to vindicate the Catholic opinion from that appearance of presumption, which the language of some of its zealous friends has annexed to it. But such language is by no means essential to the statement of this opinion. We do not say what God could have done, or what were all the reasons for his doing what we think the Scriptures tell us he has done: but we say, that in the revelation which is given of the dignity of Jesus Christ, we discern both that he was capable of giving consent, and that he is such a substitute as it became the Lawgiver to accept.

It appears then to follow, from what has been stated, that when the sins of the penitent are forgiven upon account of the substitution of the sufferings of Christ, the authority of the divine government is as completely vindicated as if transgressors had suffered all the punishment which they deserved; at the same time, the most tender compassion is displayed to the human race, so that the Supreme Lawgiver appears both merciful and just. The harmony with which the divine perfections unite in this scheme, is considered by those who hold the Catholic opinion, as a strong internal evidence, that it is the true interpretation of Scripture. For it has been often said, and it must always be repeated when this subject is discussed, that had the gospel been a simple declaration of forgiveness to all that repent, men would both have felt that a general act of indemnity, so easily pronounced, was an encouragement to sin; and, instead of being deeply impressed with the richness of that grace from which it flowed, might have regarded it as an ordinary exertion of divine goodness, of the same rank with those bounties of Providence which are daily communicated. Whereas the preparation, the solemnity, and the expense, which, according to the Catholic opinion, attended the pronouncing of this act, at once enhances the value, and guards against the abuse of it. When we behold the Son of God descending from heaven, that he might bear our sins in his body on the tree, and the forgiveness of sins preached through the name of a crucified Saviour, we read in the charter which conveys our pardon, that there is a deep malignity in sin, and we learn to adore the kindness and love of God which, at such a price, brought us deliverance. All those declarations of the placability of the divine nature, which the Socinians quote in support of their system, are thus allowed by the Catholic opinion their full force. We say as they do, that the Lord God is merciful and gracious, and ready to forgive; and although we contend that pardon is dispensed only upon account of the sufferings of Christ, yet, far from thinking that the love of God is in this way obscured, we hold that this manner of dispensing pardon is the brightest display of the greatness of the divine mercy. But we claim it as the peculiar advantage of the Catholic opinion, that according to it, the display of

mercy is conjoined with an exhibition of the evil of sin; and when we advance to other parts of the subject, we say further, that the remedy thus procured is dispensed and applied in a manner wisely calculated to give the most effectual check to those abuses, of which so striking an instance of the divine compassion is susceptible.

SECTION II.

WE have seen that, from the nature of the thing, nothing exactly similar to vicarious punishment is to be found in the transactions of men with one another. But if vicarious punishment is the foundation of the gospel remedy, that analogy which, from other circumstances, we know to pervade all the dispensations of religion from the beginning of the world, leads us to expect, in the previous intercourse between man and his Creator, some intimation of this method of saving sinners. As soon as we turn our attention to this subject, we are struck with the universal use of sacrifice. A worshipper bringing an animal to be slain at the altar of his God, presents an obvious resemblance, which has been eagerly laid hold of by those who defend the doctrine of pardon by substitution; and yet you will find, that much discussion and an accurate discrimination are necessary, before any sound and clear argument in favour of that doctrine can be warrantably drawn from this general practice. For, in the first place, many of the sacrifices of the heathen were merely eucharistical expressions of gratitude for blessings received, or festivals in honour of the deity worshipped by the sacrifice, at which he was supposed to be present, and in which it was conceived by the vulgar that he partook. Even the votive and propitiatory sacrifices, *i. e.* those which expressed a wish of the worshipper, and his earnest desire to obtain the favour of the deity, may be considered as only a method of supplication, in which a solemn action accompanied the words that were used; or as a bribe, by which the worshipper, presenting what was most precious in his own sight, solicited the protection of his god.

But, in the second place, although there were sacrifices among the heathen which approached nearer to the notion of a substitution, it is not certain whether they were of divine or of human original. To some the universality and the nature of the practice taken together appear to furnish a strong presumption, or even a clear proof, that it was in the beginning commanded by God; whilst others think, that by attending to the state of the mind under the influence of religious emotions, and to the early mode of speaking by action, a reasonable and natural account can be given of the introduction and progress of sacrifice, without having recourse to the authority of the Creator and there are many to whom it appears a strange method of defending a peculiar doctrine of revelation, to have recourse to a practice, which, although it originated in sentiments dictated to all men by particular situations, and might at first be innocent and expressive, is known to have degenerated in process of time, not, merely into a frivolous service, but into cruel and shocking rites.

I know few subjects upon which more has been written to less

purpose, than the origin of sacrifices. The only facts which are certainly known with regard to this subject are the following. No command to offer sacrifice is found in the book of Genesis. Yet Cain and Abel, the two first sons of Adam, brought offerings to the Lord, and the offering of Abel was of the firstlings of his flock.* Job, who is not supposed to have been acquainted with the books of Moses, offered burnt-offerings according to the number of his sons;† and all the nations of the earth, of whom it is at least doubtful whether their religion was derived from the Mosaic law, introduced sacrifices into the ceremonial of their worship. Now these facts are so few, and they run back into a period of which we know so little, and in which they are so naked of circumstancess, that it is possible for men of ingenuity and fancy, to give a plausible appearance to any kind of reasoning upon them, and thus to accommodate their opinion of the origin of sacrifices, to the general system of their opinions upon other subjects.

I should go very far out of my province, if I entangled myself in the labyrinth opinions upon this problematical subject. But there are two points, totally independent of any of the particular systems that have been formed concerning it, which it appears to me of much importance for those who defend the Catholic opinion to carry along with them. The one is, that amidst the multiplicity of heathen sacrifices, there were some in which the people understood that the victim was substituted in place of the offerer, and suffered the whole or a part of the punishment which the offerer deserved. I do not inquire into the origin of this kind of sacrifices, because whatever were the steps by which they were introduced, and whether they were the earliest or the latest sacrifices, it remains equally true that they were known and used by ancient nations, and that this is a fact of which the classics furnish the most abundant and various evidence. The anger of the gods, excited by some transgression, and signified by prodigies or calamities, was supposed to be averted by sacrifices, which for this reason were called *averrunca*, i. e. *iram divinam avertentia*. This was implied in the action of the worshipper, when he presented such sacrifices, viz: his laying his hands upon the head of the victim while he confessed his sins, and uttered the *solemnia verba*: and the same thing is expressed in these words of Ovid, “hanc animam vobis pro meliore damus;”‡ and of Horace, *mactatâ veniet lenior hostiâ* ;”§ and in terms often used by Livy upon such occasions, “*pacem exoscere deum*.”|| As the animal was supposed to bear the anger due to the offerer, it was believed that the more precious the victim, and the more nearly connected with the offerer, the gods would the more certainly be appeased. Hence arose the splendid hecatombs of which we read in Homer; and hence too the human sacrifices, and the offering of children by their own parents, of which we read amongst many nations. Thus Cæsar says of the Gauls, “*pro vitâ hominum nisi vita hominis reddatur, non posse aliter Deorum immortalium numen placari arbitrantur*.”¶ Justin says of the Carthaginians, “*homines ut victimas immolabant, et impuberes*

* Gen. iv. 3, 4.

† Job i. 5.

‡ Ovid. Fast. vi. 162.

§ Hor. Carm. i. 19.

|| Liv. iii. 7.

¶ Cæs. De B. G. vi. 16.

—aris admovebant, pacem Deorum sanguine eorum exposcentes.*
 The following lines of Virgil show, that the idea of a victim suffering for the sins of another was familiar to the poet and his countrymen. They are put into the mouth of Simon, who, pretending to have escaped out of the hands of the Greeks, by whom he had been destined for the altar, is brought before Priam.

Nec mihi jam patriam antiquam spes ulla videndi,
 Nec dulces natos exoptatumque parentem :
 Quos illi fors ad poenas ob nostra reposcent
 Effugia, et culpam hanc miserorum morte piabunt.†

No words can mark more significantly the nature and the effect of vicarious suffering, than the beautiful lines in which Juvenal describes the act of the Decii, in devoting themselves to death for their country ; an act which Livy had called *piaculum omnis Deorum irae*.‡

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Plebeiae Deciorum animae, plebeia fuerunt
 Nomina : pro totis legionibus hi tamen, et pro
 Omnibus auxiliis, atque omni plebe Latinâ,
 Sufficiunt Dîs infernis, Terraeque parenti :
 Pluris enim Decii, quam qui servantur ab illis.§

The second point which may be gathered from the heathen sacrifices, independently of any speculation with regard to the origin of sacrifice, is intimately connected with the first. It is this: as the practice of substituting a victim to bear the wrath due to the offerer was nearly universal, an idea which could not fail to become so familiar to the minds of all men, was everywhere expressed, so that in the languages of all nations, there are found various words which were significant of this idea, and the meaning of which evaporates, if you throw it aside. Every language must be interpreted according to the sentiments and customs of those who used it. Whether these sentiments and customs be founded in nature or in prejudice, is a matter of another consideration: but since the persons amongst whom they prevailed spoke according to their views of things, we speak unintelligibly, or with a design to mislead, if we employ their words without recollecting their ideas; and when we profess to interpret ancient books, we err against the first rules of criticism, if, instead of adopting the interpretation suggested by ancient manners, we attempt to bend the words which occur there, to ideas which we may believe to be right, but which we must acknowledge to be new.

It is known to every classical scholar, that in the language of the best Greek writers *αγος* denotes a crime, which was to be expiated by a sacrifice; that *ἀγνίζω* and *ἀγιαζω*, which are derived from *αγος*, denote the act of expiation; that *καθαίρω*, with many of its derivatives, was also applied to this effect ascribed to sacrifice; that *ἱλασσω* denotes the method of propitiating the gods by sacrifice; and that the force of these words, or the end conceived to be obtained by substituting

* Justin. Hist. xviii. 6.

† Virg. En. ii. 139.

‡ Liv. Hist. viii. 9.

§ Juv. Sat. viii. 35.

something else in place of the punishment due to the offender, was expressed in Latin, by *pio, expio, lustrō, purifico, placo*, and the like. All these are what we call *voces signatæ*, i. e. words which, when applied to sacrifice, are appropriated to a particular idea, and they were diffused through ancient languages, by an opinion which Pliny has thus described: “Vetus prisca temporibus opinio obtinuit, febriua” (an old Latin word, for which *piacula* and *piamina* came to be afterwards used,) “esse omnia, quibus malefactorum conscientia purgarentur, delerenturque peccata.”

From the Latin words now mentioned there have been transfused into modern languages, and particularly into ours, several single words and phrases significant of this opinion; and many of the Greek words passed with the universal language of ancient Greece to the other nations, and particularly to the authors of the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, and to the writers of the New Testament, in whose works every sound critic must understand them, unless some notice is given of a different acceptance, according to that which he knows to have been their received sense in the country from which they came.

Having gathered these two points from the sacrifices of other nations, we proceed to direct our attention to that people, whose history forms a large part of the Scriptures which Christians receive.

SECTION III.

IT pleased the Almighty to select the posterity of Abraham from the surrounding tribes, and out of the son whom he gave that venerable patriarch in his old age, to raise a nation, whom, by a succession of wonderful events, he reared and formed for himself, till they were ready to be planted in that land which his promise to Abraham had marked out as their habitation. The whole plan of their civil government, and all their religious institutions, had been prescribed in the intercourse which Moses their leader was permitted to hold with the Almighty during their long pilgrimage from Egypt into that land; and when they settled there, the minutest parts in the ceremonial of their worship were exactly conformable to the pattern which had been shown to Moses upon the mount.

Now sacrifice constitutes a very large part of this ceremonial; so that, amongst the people of Israel, the question with regard to the origin of sacrifices had no existence; and every circumstance relating to the quality of the victims, the purpose and the manner of offering them, was there regulated by the express appointment of Heaven.

It cannot be denied by any who receive the Scriptures, that the sacrifices prescribed in the law of Moses were of divine institution. But it has been said by many, that in the multiplicity of these sacrifices there was an accommodation to that taste which the people of Israel had acquired during their long residence in Egypt, the ancient nursery of superstition; and from thence it is insinuated, that the Jewish sacrifices do not afford a sound argument in favour of any particular opinion with regard to the nature of the gospel. The ob-

servation upon which this inference is meant to be founded may be true to a certain extent, *i. e.* we may suppose that the Almighty, who in all his dealings with his creatures remembers their infirmities, gave this people such a dispensation of religion as they were qualified to receive; and, accordingly, we are accustomed to vindicate the acknowledged imperfection of the Mosaic dispensation by saying, that it was suited to the circumstances of the world in those days. But the slightest attention will satisfy you, that to say the Mosaic ritual was accommodated to the acquired taste of the people, is to assert a proposition which cannot be admitted without very great limitations. Forty years were spent in the journey from Egypt to Canaan for this declared purpose, that the whole generation who had lived in Egypt might perish before the people were settled in their new habitation. Those whom Joshua led into Canaan were ordered to exterminate the former inhabitants, that they might not be enticed to imitate their idolatry. They were warned against inquiring how these nations had served their gods; and they were taught to regard many practices which they had left in Egypt, and which they found in the nations around Canaan, as an abomination to the Lord. “The Lord spake unto Moses saying, speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, I am the Lord your God. After the doings of the land of Egypt wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do; and after the doings of the land of Canaan whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances. Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I am the Lord your God.”* Indeed it is impossible to read the books of Moses without feeling, that as the posterity of Abraham were, in the language of the law,† a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people holy unto the Lord, so one great object of their ritual was to preserve them from the surrounding idolatry, by keeping their minds so much occupied with the service which the true God had appointed, as to leave them neither leisure nor inclination to go after other gods. In this view, it must appear not only unworthy of God, but inconsistent with the very end for which the nation was formed, that there should be imported into this ritual from their idolatrous neighbours any practice inconsistent with reason and justice; and we are entitled to assume it as a principle, that all those directions with regard to sacrifice which are found in the Jewish law, were agreeable to the nature and the perfections of that God by whose authority Moses delivered them to the people.

When we apply this principle in examining the Mosaic ritual, we immediately discover that a substitution of the victim for the offerer, which we had found amongst the sacrifice of all heathen nations, was there consecrated by the express appointment of God. It is not meant, that all the Jewish sacrifices implied this substitution. Some, as the feast of tabernacles, were national festivals in commemoration of the blessings by which the God of Israel had distinguished his people; others, as the offerings of the first-fruits, were an acknowledgment of the returning bounties of Providence; and many of the peace-offerings and freewill-offerings mentioned in the law, were ex-

* Levit. xviii. 1—4.

† Exod. xix. 5, 6. 1 Pet. ii. 9.

pressions of the devotion and gratitude of individuals, called forth by the particular events of their life. But in all burnt-offerings there were circumstances strongly expressive of a consciousness of guilt in the worshipper; and many of the burnt-offerings were called trespass and sin offerings, a name which corresponds with all the ceremonies that attend them, in conveying to us this idea, that the death of the victim was instead of that death which the worshipper deserved. Of every burnt-offering of the herd, the law thus speaks: "If his offering be a burnt-sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish. —And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt-offering, and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him."* The making atonement or propitiation has precisely that notion in the law of Moses which the words appear to us to imply, viz. the turning away the wrath of God;† so that every burnt-offering of the herd implied an acknowledgment that the worshipper deserved wrath, and was an appointed method of turning it away. In the trespass-offerings and sin-offerings, the manner of turning away wrath by the substitution of a victim to bear it, is still more directly expressed; for it appears from Leviticus iv. v. vi. that the ceremonies to be observed in such offerings consisted of the following parts. The worshipper, being conscious of his sin or his trespass, brought an animal, his own property, to the door of the tabernacle. It was understood by the nature of the animal, by the manner of his bringing it, or by the words which he uttered, that he was not bringing a freewill offering, a simple expression of gratitude and devotion, but that he was bringing an offering for the sin which he had sinned. He laid his hands upon the head of the animal, and being understood by this action to transfer to it the guilt which he had contracted, he slew it with his own hand, and then delivered it to the priest, who burnt the fat and a part of the animal upon the altar, and who, having employed part of the blood in sprinkling the altar, and in some cases the worshipper, poured all the rest at the bottom of the altar. And thus, says the law, "the priest shall make an atonement for him as concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him." The most particular directions are given with regard to the manner of disposing of the blood of all sin-offerings, and the Israelites were not permitted to eat any manner of blood: the reason of both which parts of the law is given in the following words: "I will set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people: for the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul."‡ The force of the reason lies here. As death was the sanction of the commandment given to Adam, so every person who transgressed any part of the law of Moses became guilty of death; for the law spoke on this wise, "the man which doth those things shall live by them;"§ and therefore it followed, that he who did them not was to die in his trespass. Now, in a sin-offering, the life of an animal was presented instead of that life which the sinner had forfeited. To mark this in the most significant manner, all the

* Levit. i. 3.

† Numb. xvi. 46—48.

‡ Levit. xvii. 10, 11.

§ Gal. iii. 12. Levit. xviii. 5.

blood, in which is the life of the animal, was employed in the sacrifice; and to remind the people that blood made an atonement for their souls, they were not permitted at any time to use it for food.

Sin-offerings and trespass-offerings were presented occasionally by individuals. But there was one stated day of the year, called the day of atonement, when the sin-offering was presented with peculiar solemnity for the whole congregation of Israel.* Upon that day, the high-priest, having first presented a bullock as a sin-offering for himself and his house, took of the congregation two goats, upon which he cast the lots; and the lot determined which of the two should be offered, and which should be sent away alive. There being no individual for whom the first was peculiarly offered, the high-priest himself presented and slew it; and then he took of the blood of both the bullock and the goat, and carried the blood into the holy of holies, the inmost recess of the temple, where stood the mercy-seat, which was conceived to be the residence of the God of Israel, and was distinguished by the *schechinah* or cloud of glory, the visible symbol of the divine presence. Into this holy place no other person ever entered; and the high priest only upon the day of atonement. The blood which he carried with him he sprinkled upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat; and then he came out, and sprinkled it as usual upon the altar. After he had thus, by the blood of the one goat, reconciled the holy place, and the tabernacle, he laid both his hands upon the head of the other goat, called the scape-goat, and confessed over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and sent him away thus bearing all their iniquities into the wilderness. What remained of the other goat and of the bullock was carried forth out of the camp and burnt.

While the Mosaic ritual thus clearly presents, in many of its sacrifices, vicarious punishments, or an atonement for sin, by the life of an animal which the proprietor substituted, according to the appointment of the lawgiver, in place of his own life, it limits the efficacy of this substitution to certain cases marked in the law. These cases appear to me to be three. The first respects what is called in the law uncleanness, which is described in several chapters of Leviticus. It might be contracted without any fault by certain diseases, in the discharge of pious offices, by touching a dead body, and in various other ways; and it had the effect of excluding a person from joining with his countrymen in the services of the temple. If he presumed to approach while the uncleanness continued, he incurred the penalty of death; but after purifying himself by sacrifice offered in a certain manner, he was restored to the privileges of the sanctuary. The second case respects what may be called sins of ignorance. When a person unwittingly sinned in the holy things of the Lord, or did any of the things forbidden in the law, although he wist it not, he was guilty. But upon his bringing the sacrifice prescribed in Leviticus iv. v. the priest made an atonement concerning his ignorance wherein he erred and wist it not; and it was forgiven him. The third case is mentioned in the beginning of Leviticus vi. It respects those sins which admit

* Levit. xvi.

of full restitution being made to the persons immediately affected by them: as when a thing is taken away by violence, or fraudulently detained from the right owner. The law ordered the person who had committed such a sin, in the first place, to restore the principal, and to add the fifth part more thereto, as a compensation for the loss or anxiety which the owner had sustained by the want of his property: and after he had by this restitution put the rights of the private party in the same state in which they were before, the law admitted him, although the sin was done with knowledge, to make an atonement by sacrifice for his trespass against the Lord. "He shall bring his trespass-offering unto the Lord: and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord; and it shall be forgiven him."

The effect of sacrifice did not reach to any sin not comprehended under one of these three cases. Thus it is said in general, Numb. xv. 30, 31, "The soul that doeth aught presumptuously, because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off, his iniquity shall be upon him." And this general expression of "doing aught presumptuously" is particularly applied to two kinds of sins: *first*, to such sins as blasphemy and idolatry, which indicated a contempt of the God of Israel; *secondly*, to such sins as adultery and murder, which admit of no restitution to the injured person. Neither kind could be atoned for by any sin-offering, but were punished with death. Accordingly David, who had been guilty of both adultery and murder, does not propose to bring any sin-offering, but speaks of a broken heart, as the only sacrifice which, in such a case, could be presented.* Of murder it is said, "Blood it defileth the land; and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it."† As it sometimes happened, however, that the murderer could not be found, the land was permitted to expiate the defilement which it had contracted by a sin-offering, and the murderer was conceived to carry the guilt with him.

The detail which I have now given appeared to me necessary in order to convey to your minds the true notion of the sin-offerings under the law of Moses. They are not to be regarded merely as emblematical of holiness; for although they certainly had a moral import, of the same kind as that which is often inculcated in the Old Testament by such expressions as these, "circumcising the heart, washing the heart from wickedness, he that hath clean hands," yet the words of the law by which the sin-offerings are appointed imply a great deal more than the emblematical lesson of holiness, which may be drawn from other parts of the ritual. Neither are they to be regarded merely as memorials of the placability of God towards those who had sinned; for had this been their only use, they would not have failed in the case of those heinous sins where the fears of conscience rendered such memorials the most necessary. But they are to be regarded as part of a constitution given by God to a particular nation; a constitution which, for wise purposes, appointed a variety of observances, which declared that whosoever continued not in all things written in the book of the law to do them was accursed and

* Psalm li. 17.

† Numb. xxxv. 33.

guilty of death ; but which admitted in certain cases of relaxation of the punishment threatened, upon the substitution of the life of a victim slain by the offender, and delivered by him to the priest to be offered to the Lord. God dwelt amongst this people upon a mercy-seat, towards which all their worship was directed. But this mercy-seat was approached only by the high-priest, and never by him without blood, which had been shed as an atonement for the sins of the people. The method of dispensing pardon, in the cases and to the extent in which it was dispensed among this people, was by vicarious suffering ; and the lawgiver, by appointing this method, gave, at the very time when he appeared merciful, an awful display of the purity of his nature, and the authority of his laws.

This example of vicarious punishment, which we have found in the Old Testament, is a sufficient answer to many of the objections against the Catholic opinion ; because whatever may have been the origin of expiatory victims amongst the heathen, the sin-offerings of the law, being part of a ritual which every Christian believes to be of divine institution, constitute an analogy in favour of the substitution of Christ, furnished by the express appointment of God. But this part of the Mosaic ritual is much more than an example, under the government of God, of somewhat strictly analogous to the substitution of Christ : for when it is considered with all the circumstances which belong to it, and all the light which it has received from inspired writers, it appears not only to vindicate the reasonableness, but to afford a conclusive argument in favour of the truth of the Catholic opinion.

SECTION IV.

THE connexion between the Mosaic and the Christian dispensations may be assumed in this part of our course, because we formerly found that it forms a capital branch of the evidence of Christianity. We saw, in reviewing the deistical controversy, that the Mosaic dispensation was preparatory to the Christian ; that the change was intimated by the prophets ; that the time and place of the new dispensation had been exactly marked out ; and that even predictions, which, when they were uttered, appeared to relate to events in which the prophets of their contemporaries had a part, received their full accomplishment in those events which constitute the character of the new dispensation.

In order to illustrate the force of that argument which those who hold the Catholic opinion derive from this connexion, it is proper to attend to the three great divisions of the Mosaic dispensation, which may be styled the moral, the political, and the ceremonial law. The moral law comprehended all those precepts, whether in the decalogue or in the books of Moses and the prophets, which, being founded in the nature of God and the nature of man, do not derive their obligation from temporary and local circumstances, but are in all situations binding upon reasonable creatures. The Socinians represent the moral law of Moses as essentially defective, and they say that the gospel has superinduced many new precepts. But other Christians.

who entertain more honourable apprehensions of the original state of man, and who have not the same reason for taking this method of magnifying the gospel, hold, that as morality is in its nature unchangeable, the moral precepts of every true religion must be the same; and that what the Socinians call new precepts, are only interpretations by which the great prophet, following out the true spirit of the law, vindicated the word of Moses and the prophets from those false glosses, and those absurd limitations, by which a succession of Jewish teachers had perverted their meaning. This opinion is defended at great length by a particular review of the Ten Commandments, in that chapter of the Ordinary Systems which is entitled *De Decalogo*. It is well illustrated in the section of Calvin's *Institutes de Decalogo*,—a most useful part of that valuable book. The opinion is clearly supported by the reason of the thing, by the respect with which our Lord and his apostles always speak of the moral law, and by the resemblance manifestly borne by those precepts of the gospel which the Socinians call new, to both the words and the spirit of the Old Testament.

The political law comprehends all those regulations which respected the civil government of the people of Israel, the decision of controversies, the private lives of the subjects, and their intercourse with one another. Although these regulations were of divine appointment, yet, being given to a particular nation, they are not binding upon any other nation, except in so far as it chooses to adopt them into the code of its own laws; and even to that nation to whom they were given, the possibility, and consequently the obligation, of observing these regulations varied with circumstances. For the political liberty of the nation was abridged in their captivities, in the desolations which different conquerors spread over the country, and in their subjection to the Roman empire; and it was completely taken away when the city was razed to the ground, and the remnant who survived the calamities of those days were scattered over the face of the earth. The Jewish State, which was at first literally a theocracy, in which God acted as the immediate ruler, and which was afterwards administered by judges, then by kings, then by princes or governors dependent upon other nations, has long ceased to be. The Jews, although separated by many of their customs from the people amongst whom they live, nowhere exist as a nation: it is said that they have lost that distinction of tribes which was an essential part of their civil constitution; and the Almighty, as if to show that the purpose for which he gave this singular constitution has been accomplished, has continued them above 1700 years in a situation which renders the observance of their political law impracticable.

The ceremonial law comprehends all those directions concerning the method of approaching the God of Israel, from which the Mosaic dispensation derives its peculiar character as a religious institution, and in particular the various sacrifices ordained by Moses, of which we have found sin-offerings to form a large part. But the regulations which constitute the ceremonial law had respect to particular seasons of the year, to a particular place, and to a particular succession of men, by whom many of the services were to be performed, and through whose hands all the sacrifices were to pass; and therefore, in the present situation of the Jews, when it is impossible for them to

assemble at the prescribed season, or in the place which God chose, and when the order of priesthood is lost in the confusion of tribes, the ceremonial law cannot be observed.

From this review of the three great divisions of the Mosaic dispensation, it appears that the ceremonial law, like the political, is in this respect essentially distinguished from the moral,—that it has a precarious temporary existence. The moral law is always the same. But the ceremonial law was not given till after the world had existed more than two thousand years,—it was then given only to a particular people,—and the present situation of that people, which has put an end to their political law, renders it impossible to observe the ceremonial. Unless, then, we say, that there was no true religion in the world before the days of Moses, which the Jews, who boast of their descent from Abraham, will not say; and unless we say also, that there has been no true religion in the world since the destruction of Jerusalem, which no Christian will say; we must admit that the ceremonial law is not essential to the worship of God, but consists of positive institutions, which, however wisely they may have been adapted to particular circumstances, have nothing in their nature inconsistent with change or repeal.

Thus the precarious nature of the ceremonial law is incontrovertibly established by that expiration of this law, which is a matter of fact arising necessarily from the present circumstances of the nation to whom the law was given. But this fact cannot be regarded as an unexpected consequence of the fortune of war; for it is the fulfilment of prophecies contained in the sacred books of that nation. All those intimations of a new covenant, which constitute part of the evidence of Christianity, point to the abolition of the ceremonial law. They speak of a time when the ark of the covenant shall no more be remembered nor visited,* when there shall be an altar to the Lord in the midst of Egypt,† when in every place pure incense shall be offered,‡ and God will take priests out of all nations:§ and it is declared, that sacrifice, although the most solemn and essential part of the ceremonial, was not to remain after this change of dispensation; for the prophets not only explain to the people, that sacrifices were in the sight of God of very inferior value to the observance of the moral law, and that when separated from obedience, or offered with the view of obtaining a license to sin, they were an abomination to the Lord; but they also foretell, that at the coming of that person who was to bring in the new covenant, sacrifice was to cease. The cessation of sacrifice is intimated in a part of Psalm xl. which we have learned from the apostle to the Hebrews to consider as spoken by the Messiah: “Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou hast not required. Then said I, lo! I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God.” There are many passages, both of the evangelical prophet Isaiah, and of the later prophets, which are most fitly interpreted of this event; and it is explicitly declared by the prophet Daniel, who, after marking precisely the time at which the Messiah was to be cut off, adds these

* Jer. iii. 16.

† Mal. i. 11.

‡ Isaiah xix. 19.

§ Isaiah lxvi. 21.

words, "and he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."* It is further to be remarked, that the same prophets who foretell the cessation of sacrifice intimate that the person, at whose coming it was to cease, would assume a character and perform actions fitted to supply the place of it. David calls him a priest;† Isaiah says that he shall "make his soul an offering for sin;"‡ and Daniel, who says that the Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself, represents him as making an end of sins, making reconciliation for iniquity, and bringing in everlasting righteousness at the time when, by causing the sacrifice and oblation to cease, he seals up the vision and the prophecy.§

In this manner the general connexion between the two dispensations is particularly applied to the ceremonial law, and we seem to be warranted by the language of the Old Testament to expect, that this very large part of the Mosaic institution did not merely go before the gospel, but that it has some peculiar relation to the remedy which the gospel brings. When we recollect that in all the works of God things are set over against one another, linked together by various relations, the discovery of which brings to our knowledge a fitness and perfection of design, it appears to be agreeable to our experience, as well as our ideas of the divine wisdom, that when the Almighty employed one religion to be introductory to another, he should bind them in the most intimate manner, by making the ceremonial, which was characteristical of the former religion, a figure and representation of the nature of that religion at whose coming it was to cease. And when we recollect further, that many of the prophecies which primarily respected David, Solomon, Cyrus, and other personages under the Old Testament, received an ultimate and complete accomplishment in Jesus Christ, it may occur to us as a thing analogous to this secondary sense of prophecy, that the sacrifices in the ceremonial law were intended as types and emblems of the sacrifice on the cross. It is manifest that by this kind of connexion the ceremonial law, besides accomplishing the purpose for which it was immediately given, becomes in an eminent degree subservient to that religion which is the end of the law; and the gospel, in addition to all the evidences of a divine original which it brings with itself, derives much importance, in the eyes of every devout observer, from its being so literally the fulfilment of a former dispensation. It is not a sound argument against the reality of this kind of connexion, that the typical use of the ceremonial law was not distinctly perceived by the ancient Jews. For in all subjects, the nature and the extent of the general plan of Divine Providence keeps long in the dark many points which are afterwards brought to light. The knowledge of one period of life, of one state of society, of one age of the world, although sufficient for every purpose which is then of real importance, is afterwards found to have been incomplete, and our minds are enlarged and delighted by discovering properties and uses of objects, not inconsistent certainly with the ends to which they had been applied, but of which even those who thought they understood the objects best had hardly

* Dan. ix. 27.

† Isaiah liii. 10.

‡ Psalm cx. 4.

§ Dan. ix. 24, 26.

formed any conception. Had the ancient Jews clearly understood that the dispensation under which they lived was subservient in all its parts to another, their respect for it must have been diminished. But it was necessary that their attachment to the rudiments of faith should be preserved entire till the faith was ready to be revealed; and therefore the hints of the new covenant, given from the earliest times, and gradually explained as the season of its manifestation drew near, although sufficient to produce and to cherish amongst that people the expectation of a Messiah, were not enough to create any degree of contempt, or even indifference, for the institutions of their own law.

The foregoing speculations seem to render it not improbable, that the ceremonial law of Moses and the dispensation of the gospel have that intimate kind of connexion, which consists in the former being emblematical of the latter; and these speculations are beautifully illustrated and confirmed, by attending to the manner in which the New Testament gradually unfolds this typical nature of the Jewish ceremonies. The later prophets, we have seen, had announced that sacrifice was to cease, and had said that the Messiah was to make his soul an offering for sin, and to make an end of sins. Accordingly, no sooner did Jesus appear in public, than John, the forerunner of the Messiah, marked him out by these words, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;"* thus directly applying to Jesus as his character, what Isaiah had used as a simile, "he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter."† After Jesus had, by his public discourses, by his private intercourse with his disciples, and by the succession of miracles which they beheld, confirmed their attachment, and obtained a declaration of their faith in him as the Christ, he spake to them privately of his sufferings. Afterwards he said to them more plainly, "The Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many."‡ At the last supper which he ate with his disciples before he suffered, he spoke of his blood being shed for many for the remission of sins; and upon that occasion he intimated, both by action and by words, the connexion between his sufferings and the Jewish sacrifices. On the first day of unleavened bread, when the law required the passover to be killed, he sat down with his disciples at the domestic feast which every master of a family in Israel was then holding; and before he arose from the feast he instituted the memorial of his death.§ This circumstance naturally led his disciples to connect that event with the passover which they were eating; and this inference was confirmed by that significant expression uttered by Jesus while he was sitting with them, the full import of which we now understand, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God;" *i. e.* the event which is to happen this night is the fulfilment of the passover.

Whether the apostles entered into the meaning of this expression at the time of its being uttered, we know not. For the divine wisdom, which guided the minutest actions of our Lord's life, restrained him

* John i. 29.

† Isaiah liii. 7.

‡ Matt. xx. 28.

§ Luke xxii. 14—20.

from disclosing to them hastily the typical nature of the Jewish ritual. As according to the flesh he came of David, and was thus born under the law, it was part of his entire obedience to the will of God, to comply in all things with the law of Moses; and the principle of his compliance was thus expressed by himself, when John the Baptist discovered a surprise at his coming to be baptized by him, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." * There would have been an unfitness in his appearing to disparage that ceremonial, which continued in force till his death, while he was daily observing it. But in the interval between his resurrection and his ascension, after he had fulfilled the passover by dying on the cross, he showed, by an interpretation of all the hints which he had given during his life, in what sense he was the end of the law. "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." † He had been accustomed while he was with them to apply to himself many expressions in the ancient Scriptures of the Jews; but now "he opened their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures: and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." ‡ Accordingly his apostles who heard this discourse, and Paul, who was enlightened by a special revelation, appear in the book of Acts building their preaching of the gospel upon this foundation, that they said "none other things than those which Moses and the prophets did say should come, that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead." ‡

Now, although the prophets foretell that Christ should suffer, there is not in the books of Moses, after the original promise respecting the seed of the woman, any prediction that the Shiloh, the Prophet, the Star out of Jacob there foretold, was to suffer; and we are at a loss to conceive how any thing in these books can be considered as an intimation of the sufferings of the Messiah, except the types that are to be found in the sacrifices of the law. It seems natural, therefore, to presume, that our Lord upon that occasion, when he opened the understandings of his disciples, that they might understand the Scriptures, explained to them these types, and that from thence they learned to speak, as they do, of the typical nature of the Jewish sacrifices.

John the Evangelist, in relating the circumstances of our Lord's death, introduces the last word which he uttered, τέτελεσται, "it is finished," in a manner which shows that he referred it to the fulfilment of the Scriptures: and having mentioned, that when the soldiers came to Jesus they did not break his legs, as they had broken the legs of those who were crucified with him, the Evangelist leads us back to a direction given about the paschal lamb, "For these things were done that the Scriptures should be fulfilled; a bone of him shall not be broken." § The Apostle Paul says in one place, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: || in another place, "Christ gave himself for

* Matt. iii. 15.

† Luke xxiv. 44, 45, 27.

‡ Acts xxvi. 22, 23.

§ John xix. 26—37.

|| 1 Cor. v. 7.

us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.”* He says that the law was a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ; that Christ is the end of the law; that the meats, and drinks, and washings under the law, were a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ:† and by all these incidental expressions he has prepared us for that full account of this matter which we receive in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

It appears from several circumstances, that the Epistle to the Hebrews was written a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem; an event which of necessity put an end to the ceremonial law, by rendering the observance of that law impracticable. The epistle is addressed to the Hebrews, *i. e.* natural born Jews, who had been educated in reverence for the law, who had suffered persecution from their countrymen for having embraced Christianity, and who, after they had resisted this fiery trial, were assailed by reasoning. The unbelieving Jews represented the gospel as an innovation upon a system which was confessedly of divine original, a presumptuous attempt to supersede the law which the God of Israel, in terrible majesty, gave by Moses, and an insult to the wisdom and piety with which their ancestors had cherished the national faith. For many years after the ascension of Jesus, his apostles had shown much tenderness to the prejudices of the Jews. But as the destruction of Jerusalem approached, they found less occasion for reserve in arguing against these prejudices. There was no unfitness in explaining the precarious subordinate nature of the Mosaic system, when the whole fabric was just about being dissolved; and it pleased God, in the reply which the apostle to the Hebrews enabled the Christian Jews to give to the arguments of their adversaries, to furnish Christians in all ages with a most instructive view of the continuity of the two dispensations; a view which, while it opens many circumstances respecting the use of the law of Moses, implied indeed in other parts of Scripture, but no where else so clearly taught, assists us in deriving from the connection between the Law and the Gospel the fullest illustration of the truth of that opinion concerning the nature of the Gospel remedy, which considers the death of Christ as a vicarious sacrifice for sin.

The plan of the first ten chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews may be thus shortly delineated—The apostle begins with unfolding the dignity of that Person by whom the Gospel was given; the glory which originally belonged to him, as the Son of God, and the Creator of the world; and the honour with which he is now crowned, after having accomplished that gracious purpose, in the conduct of which he appeared, for a little, lower than the angels. A message brought by this exalted Person claims particular attention: Moses was faithful as a servant, but Christ comes as a Son over his own house; and all the instances in which the blessings of the Mosaic dispensation were forfeited by unbelief, and disobedience to the word spoken by angels received punishment, are lessons of reverence and attention to the word spoken by Him, who has a name that is above every name. The appearance of this messenger was not unexpected, for God had declared of old times in the law, that he was ordained to the office

* Ephes. v. 2.

† Gal. iii. 24. Rom. x. 4. Col. ii. 16, 17

which he undertook. The same dispensation which established the Levitical priesthood spoke of a time when that priesthood was to be changed; and taught those who submitted to it to look for one who was to arise, not according to the lineal succession of the house of Aaron, but who pertained to the tribe of Judah, a tribe which had never given attendance at the altar, and who was called after another order. This new order is named the order of Melchisedek, because in the book of Genesis a person of this name is mentioned, who, being king of Salem, and a priest of the most high God, received tithes of Abraham. He was a priest, therefore, in the days of Abraham, the great-grandfather of Levi. But as the house of Aaron, and the whole tribe of Levi were descended from Abraham, it was not possible to give any more express intimation of a change of that priesthood which was after the order of Aaron, than by declaring, that the new priest was after the order of Melchisedek, a priest whose descent, although left in such perfect obscurity by Scripture, that he is said to be "without father, without mother, without descent," could not possibly be counted from Levi, because his office existed in the days of Abraham, that illustrious progenitor to whom the Jews traced back all the privileges of their nation.

While intimation was thus given in the law itself of a complete change of the Levitical priesthood, no change or succession was spoken of in the new order; but it was declared and confirmed by an oath, that the person who should arise after the order of Melchisedek was to be a priest for ever. In this respect, therefore, he was manifestly superior to all the priests who had been called after the order of Aaron, that while the individuals were not suffered to continue, by reason of death, and the whole order was at length to be abolished, he had an unchangeable priesthood: and he was superior to them in this further respect, that all their ministrations, and all the appurtenances of divine service which they used, were only shadows and faint images of the manner in which he was to exercise his office. The tabernacle of Moses was indeed made according to a pattern showed to him by God in the mount; but the heavenly things to be accomplished by the unchangeable priesthood, having been ordained by God from the beginning, were in his contemplation at the time when the pattern was shown; and the tabernacle, formed in the intermediate space according to that pattern, was only an example and shadow of these heavenly things.

Such is a general view of the argument in the first ten chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews, containing a complete answer to the reasonings of the unbelieving Jews. They said that the gospel was an innovation upon the Mosaic system, a presumptuous attempt to supersede the revelation given to their fathers; and therefore, that it became every person who believed in the divine institution of the law of Moses, without examining the contents of the new faith, instantly to reject its claim. But the apostle shows that the gospel was given by a glorious Personage, superior to all the former messengers of heaven; a personage whose appearance had been announced in the law of Moses, whose office as a priest had been there declared to be unchangeable, and whose actions in fulfilling that office were shadowed forth and prefigured by all the institutions of the law. Far

therefore from there being any impiety to the God of Israel, any derogation from the respect due to Moses, any apostacy from the Jewish religion, in embracing the gospel, it was the duty of every obedient and intelligent disciple of Moses to receive him who is the end of the law.

That branch of the argument, in which the apostle represents the sacrifices of the law of Moses as figures and shadows of the sacrifice on the cross, deserves particular attention. The following passages of the epistle will sufficiently exhibit it :—Heb. viii. 5. *Δείγμα* is a part taken from a thing as a method of showing the rest. Its compound *ὑποδειγμα*, in this verse, is a more obscure method of showing ; not a specimen but a figure. *Σκια* presents the outlines of the body from which it proceeds. *Τυπος* is a mark made upon an object by striking it ; an impression ; John xx. 25, *τον τυπον των ἡλων* ; hence the likeness of the striking body which remains in the body struck ; in general, a figure or representation.

Heb. ix. 9–14.—9, *παράβολη*, *collocatio*, placing two things by the side of one another, in order to observe their points of resemblance and dissimilitude ; such a representation of the things that were to come, as it was proper for persons living in that time to have before them.—10. “Carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation ;” *i. e.* ordinances which had the effect of making a person righteous before God, in respect of the flesh, but did not reach the conscience, lying upon them, imposed, till the fit season of making things right by another covenant.—11. “A tabernacle not made with hands ;” *i. e.* not in the manner in which the tent of Moses was made. This is a circumlocution by which the apostle gives notice that he is using the phrase figuratively for the body of Christ.—13. The water of separation, mentioned in Numbers xix. was thus obtained. A red heifer was killed and burnt ; the ashes were gathered and kept in a clean place ; and some of the ashes were put into a vessel and running water added to them. A bunch of hyssop dipped in this water was employed to sprinkle every person, who upon any account had touched a dead body, before he was permitted to approach the tabernacle. Every thing that was separated from other uses for the service of God was by that separation holy. Every thing that was employed for the ordinary purposes of life was, by this common use, unfit for the service of God. Hence *κοινος*, impure ; *κοινωω*, *polluo*. The sprinkling with hyssop did not make the person a better man than he was, or obtain remission of his sins ; it only removed that accidental defilement, or unfitness for the service of God which he had contracted.—14. *δια του Πνευματος αιωνιον*. The Holy Ghost is represented throughout the New Testament as having a part in all the actions of our Lord :—as given to him without measure,—and as descending upon him at his baptism. It is said that our Lord was led by the Spirit,—that by the Spirit of God he did mighty works,—that he was raised, quickened, justified by the Spirit. So here the Spirit supported him in his sacrifice on the cross. Every victim was required by the law to be blameless. He was without sin. The water of separation purified from the touch of a dead man. His offering purified from dead works, or those sins which defile the conscience.

Heb. ix. 21–24. *λειτουργια*, public service.—22. *σχεδον*, “Almost all

things are by the law purged with blood." Poor persons were allowed, upon some occasions, to bring offerings in which no animal was slain. *χοῆς*, referring to that expression in the law, "Blood maketh atonement for the soul."—24. *αντιτυπα* in 1 Pet. iii. 21, means what we call the antitype; here, the type or impression representing another thing.

Heb. x. 11–18.—In this passage the apostle argues from the nature of the offerings under the law, and from the daily repetition of them, that they did not take away sin; and he quotes the ancient Scriptures, which promised forgiveness of sin as one of the blessings of the new covenant, in proof of the perfection of the sacrifice offered under that covenant.

The passages above referred to suggest the following remarks, which are so clearly grounded upon the words and the reasonings of the apostle, that I think it enough barely to mention them without adding any illustration. 1. The apostle ascribes a certain effect to the Jewish sacrifices, which he calls purifying the flesh, and which we find it easy to interpret by our knowledge of the Mosaic law. 2. This effect was attained by the shedding the blood of those victims which were offered day by day, and year by year, according to the commandment of God, and by the priests sprinkling the blood upon the altar. 3. An effect of a very superior kind is said to be attained under the Gospel, which the apostle calls purifying the conscience, making the worshippers perfect, and which he explains by the remission of sins. 4. In describing these two effects, he uses the two words *καθαρίζω* and *ἀγιάζω*, which, in the language of ancient Greece, denoted what we call expiation by sacrifice. 5. Agreeably to this received meaning of these words, he represents the superior effect as attained by the one sacrifice for sins, which the High Priest of our profession offered, when he gave his body on the cross once for all; and by his carrying his own blood into heaven. 6. And he represents the manner of attaining the inferior effect, as intended by God to be a shadow, a figure, a type of that manner of attaining the superior effect which had from the beginning entered into the councils of heaven, and with a view to which all the services that pertained to the inferior effect had been established according to the pattern shown to Moses.

When we lay these parts of the apostle's argument together, this conclusion seems clearly to follow, that in his apprehension the offering of Christ upon the cross was a true sacrifice for sin, which has as real an influence in procuring the forgiveness of sin, and so relieving the conscience from a sense of guilt, as the sacrifices under the law had in removing those legal defilements which rendered men unfit to approach the tabernacle.

As this conclusion is the most direct confirmation of the Catholic opinion, the Socinians have employed all their ingenuity to evade the necessity of drawing it; and their reasonings upon this subject, as far as I have been able to collect them, may be reduced to the two following heads:—

1. They say that the whole language and reasoning of the apostle to the Hebrews is merely an allusion to Jewish customs; that it was natural for an apostle of Jesus, who had been bred at the feet of

Gamaliel, to endeavour to avail himself of the education, in which he tells us he had profited above his equals, in order to do honour to the new faith which he had embraced; that in all his writings Paul discovers a propensity to use bold figures of speech, and that there was a peculiar propriety in the figure which pervades this Epistle, because it tended to magnify the religion of Jesus in the eyes of those to whom he was writing. Men, who had been accustomed to reverence the splendour of the Mosaic institution, could not instantly be reconciled to the simplicity and spirituality of the faith of Christ. The apostle, therefore, decking out the gospel in trappings borrowed from the law, presents to the Hebrews, a sacrifice, a tabernacle, and a High Priest; and although he knew that the only effect of the death of Christ is to furnish motives for that repentance, the consequence of which is forgiveness, he accommodates the sacrificial terms of the law, to give this effect a more venerable appearance. The prejudices of the Jews were soothed by this accommodation; but it was not intended for other Christians; and we miss the design of a writer, whose principle it was to become all things to all men, if we form our notions of the gospel from a manner of expressing himself, which condescension to persons of a particular denomination led him to assume.

This account of the Epistle to the Hebrews cannot proceed from persons who entertain an exalted idea of the inspiration of Scripture. It is indeed inconsistent with the lowest degree of inspiration which can be supposed necessary to render the Scriptures a safe guide into all truth. The account is incorrect in representing this view of the connexion between the sacrifices of the law and the sacrifice of the cross, as peculiar to the Epistle to the Hebrews; for although particular circumstances led the writer of that epistle to give a fuller illustration of the subject than is elsewhere to be found, yet we discover traces of the same connexion, both in the law itself, and in different places of the New Testament; and there is not the smallest inconsistency between all that is said by this writer and any thing that is said in any other part of Scripture. The account is dishonourable to this writer, because it represents him as arguing falsely, and using both words and reasonings with an intention to mislead.

You will be satisfied of the dishonour which this account does to the writer of the epistle, if you attend to the following circumstances:—

1. The words *παθαινω* and *αγιαζω*, which had a received meaning in the sacrifices of those nations to whose language they belong, are applied by the apostle, according to that sense, to the sacrifices under the law; and in the same discourse they are applied to the effects of the death of Christ. But there cannot be a greater abuse of figurative language than to employ words, first literally, then metaphorically, and in the progress of a long argument often to alternate, the literal and the metaphorical sense of them, without giving any notice of the change.

2. But the purport of the apostle's argument does not admit of our understanding these words metaphorically. Whatever were the motives which led the apostle to argue in this manner, it is unquestionably the purport of his argument to show, that Christ is a high priest, that his death was an offering, and that this offering attained the end of sacrifice. Now, such an argument requires the use of the

words *καθαίρω* and *ἀγιάζω*, not in a metaphorical, but in the literal sense, for if these words apply to the sacrifices of the law literally, and to the sacrifice of Christ metaphorically, then the whole argument is a sophism, and the apostle is guilty of something much worse than an abuse of figures, he is a false reasoner.

3. The apostle says expressly, that the sacrifices under the law were shadows, figures, types of the true sacrifice of the cross; *i. e.* instead of applying the words *καθαίρω* and *ἀγιάζω*, in allusion to the law, he maintains that the truth of the terms is found under the gospel, and that the law was an allusion to this truth. You will observe, that as a shadow must present the outlines of the body from which it proceeds, as a *τυπος*, in the primary sense of that word, must express the figure of that body by the stroke of which it was formed; so in the use which we are accustomed to make of the words type and antitype, there must be a resemblance between them, because it is by means of this resemblance that the one thing becomes the type of the other. What we call a symbol is an arbitrary sign of something past or present, whose meaning depends upon invention; and we understand that any one thing may be made the sign of another, as sounds of thought, and written characters of sounds. But what we call a type is a sign of something future, whose nature is expressive of the thing typified; and there could be no connexion between the two, if the thing typified were destitute of that which is characteristical of the type. Hence, when we say the Jewish sacrifices were typical of the Messiah, we mean by the use of the word typical, that their nature somehow corresponded to the design of his coming. Had they attained the end of sacrifice completely, there would have been no need for his becoming a sacrifice; had they not attained it in any measure, they would not have been types of his sacrifice; but by purifying the flesh, *i. e.* rendering it lawful and safe for persons to approach the tabernacle, who, from legal uncleanness, or sins of ignorance, could not have approached it without death, and yet leaving the consciences of the worshippers in the same state as before, they were in their nature fitted to typify, *i. e.* to exhibit, by an imperfect resemblance, that sacrifice which relieves the conscience, and by which "all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." The logical propriety of terms, therefore, requires that we ascribe a certain effect to the Jewish sacrifices, and that we ascribe a higher effect of the same kind to the sacrifice of the cross. But this is the very thing which the apostle does; for we found by an analysis of his argument, that he speaks of both effects as real. And thus, if we only give the words *καθαίρω* and *ἀγιάζω*, in his discourse the same interpretation which we are accustomed to give them in the writings of the ancient Greeks, he appears to be strictly accurate in the use of the term *τυπος*; whereas, if we give these two words a new interpretation, by which we make him guilty of an abuse of figurative language, and a kind of false reasoning, we also fix upon him the absurdity, that he calls one thing a type of another, although the thing typified wants that which is characteristical of the type; so that the type mentioned by the apostle, instead of being an imperfect representation, has more than the antitype; and the things to which these names are applied

have not that resemblance in kind, without which the names have no meaning.

4. To all that has been said, it must be added, in the last place, that the apostle is not here handling an argument, but he is addressing a great body of people, converted from Judaism to Christianity; and he professes to relieve their minds from the apprehension of impiety in forsaking the law of Moses, by stating, that all the sacrifices which had been offered for ages according to the law were superseded by that one sacrifice on the cross, which, being the truth shadowed forth by them, rendered further offering unnecessary. The argument was most satisfying to those Jews who received it upon the authority of the apostle. But if he only spoke in accommodation to their prejudices, he dealt unfairly with them; because whenever they discovered, by their intercourse with other Christians, that the death of Christ was in reality no sacrifice, the scruples which the apostle had professed to remove would naturally revive; and since he had assumed it as a principle, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins, it will appear to them their safest course to return to that religion in which they certainly knew that blood made an atonement for the soul.

This last reason is stated in its full force in a passage of this epistle, xiii. 9—14; in reading which it must be remembered, that the ceremonies of the law were familiar to the persons whom the apostle is addressing; that he combats teachers who endeavoured to draw them back from the simplicity of the gospel, to the observance of these ceremonies; and that his epistle was written about eight years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

From these four reasons it seems to follow, that, unless we hold the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews to be both an inconclusive and a sophistical reasoner, we cannot admit the first position, by which the Socinians endeavour to evade the argument in favour of the Catholic opinion drawn from that epistle; but we must consider the manner in which the Jewish sacrifices are there spoken of as involving this principle, that the offering on the cross did efficaciously take away sin by the substitution of a victim for the sinner.

2. But if it should be found impossible to resolve the reasoning of the apostle into a bare accommodation to Jewish customs, or a moral lesson,—if there must be something substantial in that which the Mosaic ritual shadowed forth, a second position is adopted by those who deny the truth of the Catholic opinion. It is the refuge to which the early followers of Socinus betook themselves, in order to evade the reality of the sacrifice of the cross; and it coincides with that which I called the middle opinion concerning the nature of the gospel remedy.

They said that under the law the priest made the atonement; that it was not the victim, which was of little value, and was slain by the offerer himself, but the oblation of the victim by the priest, which procured forgiveness; and that on the great day of atonement, the most important part of the ceremony was the high priest entering into the holy of holies, and appearing before the mercy-seat for the people. They learned from the Epistle to the Hebrews, that these typical parts of the law were fulfilled by the priesthood of Christ;

they found the apostle stating the superior excellence of his priesthood as consisting in this, that he went not into the holy place made with hands, but into the true holy place, *i. e.* heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us; and they understood the apostle as saying that it is his entering there which makes him a priest; for so they interpreted these words, Heb. viii. 4, "If he were on earth he should not be a priest." Upon these grounds they conceived that the priesthood of Christ commenced when he ascended to heaven, and that he is said to be a priest for ever upon this account only, because he continues without intermission, through his power and favour with God, to take away the guilt of our sins. The amount, then, of the second position is, that Christ was not truly a priest, and that he did not offer any real sacrifice while he was upon earth; but that his sufferings were merely a preparation for his priesthood which is exercised in heaven.

The imperfection of this system is obvious to any person who carries the whole subject in his mind. The priests indeed made atonement, but it was by the blood of the victim which had been slain. The high priest entered in once a year into the holy place, but it was with the blood of the goat and the bullock, both of which he had on that day slain with his own hand; and he reconciled the holy place by sprinkling it with the blood. "Every high priest taken from among men," says the apostle, Heb. viii. 3, 4, "is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer." Jesus then performed the office of a priest in offering a sacrifice, but he did not complete the office by that act; for, in order to fulfil the types of the law, it was necessary that he should carry the blood which he had offered into the holy place. Upon this account he went into heaven; and this is the meaning of these words of the apostle. "If he were on earth he should not be a priest," *i. e.* if he had remained on earth after his sacrifice, no part of his actions would have corresponded to the entrance of the high priest into the holy place. But his appearance in heaven is stated, in various places of the Epistle, as subsequent to his sacrifice, and as deriving its efficacy from the blood which he has carried thither. We are led to consider him as completely a priest, because there are in his case both the immolation and the oblation of a victim; and the nature of the victim is conjoined with the place where it continues to be presented to God, in all the views of the excellence of his priesthood.

Thus, according to our interpretation of the apostle's reasoning, every part of the Mosaic ritual finds its accomplishment in the priesthood of Christ, and the analogy between the two dispensations is so entire and so exact, that we are satisfied of the truth of the whole reasoning. According to that system which is adopted in the second position, a large portion of the ceremonial of Jewish sacrifice has no counterpart under the gospel; Jesus bears the name of a priest without having done what is characteristic of that office; and that method of procuring the blessings of the gospel, which the Scriptures reveal, is confounded with the power and the tenderness which the High Priest of our profession exhibits in dispensing them.

SECTION V.

THE argument upon which we have dwelt so largely appears to me conclusive. But it is not desirable that so important an article of our faith as that which the Catholic opinion involves, should rest upon a single view of the subject, or upon the pertinency of a particular kind of phraseology; and therefore, in order to show that this opinion is unquestionably the doctrine of Scripture, and that the phrases employed in stating it, although not used by the inspired writers, are clearly warranted by the revelation which they have given, it is proper to take a more enlarged survey of the language and the views upon this subject which the Scriptures present. We shall meet in this survey with some of the sacrificial terms which we have lately been considering; but if we find, that even when a resemblance to the Jewish ritual was not the leading idea, the amount of what the inspired writers say concerning the gospel remedy is perfectly agreeable to the Catholic opinion, we may rest without hesitation in the conclusion which they taught us to draw from that resemblance.

It is known to those who search the Scriptures, that the discourses of our Lord and the writings of his apostles abound with allusions to passages in the Old Testament, even when no express quotation is made; and therefore it is not surprising to find in one passage the ground-work of all that we read in the New Testament concerning the doctrine of atonement. That passage is Isaiah liii. The prophet, in many places of his book, blends with the description of the Messiah's kingdom events of his own time, as types of that glorious period; but in this chapter he appears to have lost sight of every inferior personage, and his mind is completely occupied with the illustrious deliverer that was to come to Zion, particularly with the nature, the character, and the effects of his sufferings. The ancient Jews understood this chapter to refer to the Messiah, although they certainly did not enter into the true meaning of all the parts of it.

But to us it is interpreted by the manner in which the writers of the New Testament relate those events which the prophets there foretold; and when we avail ourselves of the light which his prediction and their commentary throw upon one another, we are enabled to arrange that support which the Catholic opinion derives from the general language and the views of Scripture, under the three following heads:—the bitterness of the sufferings of Christ taken in conjunction with the innocence and dignity of the sufferer;—the character uniformly given of his sufferings as a punishment for sin;—and the various descriptions of the effects of this punishment. These three points, collected from Scripture in one complex view, constitute the evidence, that the doctrine of pardon by the substitution of the sufferings of Christ in place of the punishment due to sinners is the doctrine of Scripture.

1. The first point to be attended to is what may be called the value of the sufferings of Christ; because had they been of little value, they could not have answered that purpose which is assigned to them in

the Catholic opinion. I need not particularly quote the well-known texts of Scripture, which place this value in the bitterness of the sufferings cheerfully undergone by an innocent and exalted person. The whole history of his life is a commentary upon the significant words of the prophet, "He is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" for he was not a stranger to any kind of affliction, and, in the hour of his greatest distress, every alleviation was removed from him. To the meanness of his condition, the scorn and persecution of his enemies, the pains of his body, and all the visible circumstances by which death to him was aggravated, there falls to be added what the New Testament calls an agony, which is described, Mark xiv. 33. 34; Luke xxii. 41—44; John xii. 27. In these passages we meet with the following terms, *γενομενος εν αγωνια*; *ψυχη μου τεταραχται*; *περιλυπος εως θανατου*; *εχθαμλεισθαι*, to be amazed, or in that state of mind which we express by the word horror; to be astonished, stupified with grief; to lose for a little the power of exercising the mind; *αδημονειν*, *extra populi consortium degere*, *hominum vestigia vitare*, to have the mind stupified and absorbed in its own feelings. The expressions used by the historians paint the utmost distress of mind, during which the human nature of Jesus shrunk at the prospect that lay before him; and the apostle to the Hebrews manifestly refers to their description when he says, Heb. v. 7, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears—"Those who consider Jesus as merely a man, and who by consequence must consider his sufferings as no atonement for sin, find it impossible to give a reasonable account why, in the prospect of death, an event which to him surely was no great evil, he should discover an agitation of mind, so unlike that firmness which many other men have displayed in circumstances to outward appearance exactly similar. But those who hold the Catholic opinion consider this agony as the fulfilment of the words of Isaiah liii. 10, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him;" and of these words, Isaiah lxiii. 3, where the Messiah says of himself, "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me." They connect this agony with the words spoken by Jesus on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and although they presume not to explain in what it consisted, yet as they believe that the wrath of God due to the sins of the world was laid immediately upon Jesus, they find no difficulty in conceiving that his spirit, left without the wonted measure of support and comfort which it derived from its union with the Word and from the presence of his Father, experienced a darkness and desertion in comparison with which all the sorrow that man can inflict is light. Some have applied to this agony that article of the creed, "he descended into hell." But as we know that these words meant, according to the sense of those who first introduced them into the creed, that the soul of Jesus went into the region of departed spirits at the time when his body was laid in the grave, so if we believe there is no such region, we are not warranted by the language of Scripture to apply to the sufferings of Christ an expression which will seem to us to convey that they were the same in kind as the punishment of the damned.

Whatever was the nature of the agony which shook and troubled

the spirit of Jesus, it was connected with entire resignation. He said in the time of it, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt; for this cause came I to this hour:" and at all other times he spoke of his sufferings with a readiness to encounter them, which magnifies his character, and adds to their value. The innocence of Jesus was illustrated by his sufferings; for as the prophet Isaiah had said, liii. 8, 9, according to Bishop Lowth's translation, "he was taken away by an oppressive judgment;" "he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth;" so it appeared upon the trial which he underwent, that all the malice of his enemies could not convict him of sin. One of his companions on the cross, while he acknowledged that he himself received the just reward of his deeds, declared of Jesus that he had done nothing amiss; and the disciple who betrayed him, after having been intimately acquainted with his private as well as his public life, is introduced in the gospels repenting of his foul deed, and bearing the most unexceptionable testimony to his Master, in these words, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood." In this manner does the New Testament place the innocence of Jesus fully in our view, at the very time when it describes his sufferings. But it represents him as much more than innocent; for, as I stated formerly in relation to the importance of the doctrine of the Hypostatical Union, the general strain of the New Testament leads us to conjoin the peculiar value which is there affixed to the sufferings of Jesus with the peculiar dignity of his person; and we can clearly discern, in those purposes of the incarnation of the Son of God which the Scriptures declare, the reason why they have dwelt so largely upon the divinity of his character. Thus his condescension is said to consist in this, that he who was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, humbled himself, and became obedient to the death of the cross;* "hereby perceive we," says John, "the love of God, because he laid down his life for us;"† the love of the Father is commended to us in different places, by his giving his only begotten Son, his beloved Son, and delivering him to the death for us; and Jesus is never classed with martyrs or other righteous men, who "loved not their lives unto the death;" but the apostles, in speaking of his blood, affix to it a preciousness infinitely beyond that of any blood which ever was shed.

2. The second point to be collected from a general survey of the language and the views of Scripture is this, that the sufferings of Christ, the peculiar bitterness of which derived such a value from the innocence and dignity of the sufferer, are not stated as mere calamity, but are always described under the characters which belong to a punishment of sin. God is never represented as exercising in the sufferings of his Son that right of sovereignty which belongs to the Lord and Proprietor of all, but as inflicting what was due to the transgression of his law; and Jesus Christ, who is essentially distinguished from all other men in this respect, that he did not know sin, is represented in these sufferings as bearing the sins of others.

The different expressions by which this character of the sufferings of Christ is intimated may be reduced to two general classes:

* Phil. ii. 6—8.

† 1 John iii. 16.

1. The first includes all the prepositions in the Greek language that are employed to mark substitution. As it is said by Isaiah "he was wounded for our transgressions," so it is said in the New Testament that "he was delivered for our offences, that he died for us, that he suffered for sins, the just for the unjust."* These expressions certainly suggest the notion of a substitution, in which the sufferings and death of one person are instead of the sufferings and death which the sins of others deserved. But Socinus has led the way to all who hold any part of his system, in attempting to elude this notion, by saying, that Christ's suffering for sins means nothing more than his suffering for this end, that we might be led to forsake our sins; and that his dying for us only means his dying for our advantage. No person who is accustomed to study language, will assert in answer to this interpretation, that *for* necessarily implies substitution, because every scholar knows that even when he is able to ascertain the primary meaning of a preposition, he often finds that primary meaning so qualified by the words with which the preposition is joined, that in different situations it appears totally different. We say in English, Christ suffered for sins, and Christ suffered for us; but every one understands the preposition *for* to have different meanings in these two phrases. We explain the first, Christ suffered upon account of sins; the second, Christ suffered instead of the sinners. And this ambiguity is not peculiar to the English; in Greek also the same preposition *ὑπέρ* is employed to express these different ideas; for we read, 1 Pet. ii. 21, 2 Cor. v. 15, Χριστος ἐπαθεν, ἀπεθάνεν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν; 1 Cor. xv. 3, ἀπεθάνεν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν. The proper meaning of *ὑπέρ* is over, above. It suggests primarily the notion of covering; and this may be applied, either to the covering a person from danger, or the covering a thing from sight. The phrase *ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν* may denote any kind of benefit which we derive from another person; but it marks with peculiar fitness his sustaining that harm which we should have sustained, had we not been covered by him. It cannot be denied that classical writers use *ὑπέρ* in situations where a substitution is plainly implied; and the Scriptures intimate that there is a peculiar emphasis in the application of this preposition to the sufferings of Christ. For although the apostle Paul, Col. i. 24, speaks of τοῖς παθήματι μου ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν, yet he asks, 1 Cor. i. 13, μή Παῦλος ἐσταυρώθη ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν; intimating, that even although his enemies should crucify him, his crucifixion could not give him that kind of connexion with Christians which arose from the crucifixion of Christ. In the other phrase, *ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν*, *ὑπέρ* cannot denote advantage; and without a violent ellipsis it cannot be understood of the final cause; for the end of Christ's sufferings was not our sins, but the remission of our sins. But it is naturally understood, according to a frequent use of this preposition, of what we call the antecedent cause; that cause which, having a previous existence, produces an action. Sins existed before Christ died, and their demerit produced his sufferings; therefore it is said, ἀπεθάνεν ὑπὲρ ἁμαρτιῶν, as we read in Isoerates, *πὲρ ὧν δόντες τοῖς θεοῖς δίκας*,† and often in Latin, *pro injuriis ulcisci*. The antecedent cause is expressed in

* Rom. iv. 25; v. 8. 1 Pet. iii. 18.

† Isoc. Plat. p. 716. Edit. Basil.

different places of Isaiah liii. by the preposition *δια*, the preposition most commonly used in that sense. *Εξαναματισθη δια τας ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν—δια τας ανομίας αὐτῶν παρεδόθη*; and the apostle Paul appears to have copied this expression, Rom. iv. 25; yet, in that very verse, *δια* is also used to mark the final cause; for while our offences were the antecedent cause which produced the sufferings of Christ, our justification is the end obtained by his resurrection. *Περί* is also used in the Greek Testament for this purpose, as Rom. viii. 3; 1 Peter iii. 18. *Περί ἁμαρτιῶν* means, in relation to our sins; and the nature of the relation is to be gathered from the Septuagint, where what is rendered in our English Bible, “he shall bring for his sin which he hath sinned,” runs in the Greek, *οἰσει περί τῆς ἁμαρτίας ἧς ἥμαρτε*. This expression, therefore, is one of the many instances in which the New Testament leads us back to the sacrifices of the law.

There is one Greek preposition yet remaining, *ἀντι*, which our Lord himself uses, Matt. xx. 28; from whence the apostle Paul, 1 Tim. ii. 6, probably formed the compound word *ἀντιπαιτερον*. It is well known that *ἀντι*, which perfectly expresses that one thing is set over against another, conveys the nature of commutation, substitution, succession; and it was impossible to find any preposition which could have marked more precisely this idea, that the life of Christ is given instead of many. Even *ἀντι*, however, may be used by the best writers in a looser sense, for the advantage of; and no scholar would choose to rest an important article of faith upon the strict acceptation of a preposition. We do not therefore argue, that because we find *ἐπερ*, *δια*, and *ἀντι* employed upon this subject, the Catholic opinion is unquestionably the doctrine of Scripture. But we maintain, that if there was in the death of Christ a substitution of his sufferings for the punishment of sin, it could not have been more naturally or significantly expressed than by these prepositions; and that the meaning which a reader whose mind is unwarped by system feels himself disposed to affix to them, and the violent interpretations which are necessary in order to evade that meaning, create a strong presumption in favour of the truth of this opinion.

2. But there is a second class of expressions in Scripture, in which that character of a punishment for sin which seems to be signified by the use of these prepositions, is directly applied to the sufferings of Christ.

Isaiah, after having said “he was wounded for our transgressions, and he was bruised for our iniquities,” adds, “*παιδεία ειρηνῆς ἐπ’ αὐτοῦ, τῷ μωλωπι αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς ἰαθημεν*; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, by his stripes we are healed.” Again, “*ἀνοίσει*, he shall bear their iniquities, *ἀνῆνεγκε*, he bare the sin of many.” This language of the prophet is copied, 1 Peter ii. 24, and it is referred to, Heb. ix. 28. The significancy of the preposition *ἀνα* in the compound verb *ἀνῆνεγκε* lies in this, that as Jesus was lifted up on the cross, he may be said to have carried our sins upward when he bore them; and that this circumstance was attended to in the use of this compound verb appears not improbable, when we find the apostle, Heb. vii. 27, applying the same verb *ἀναφερω* first to the sacrifices of the law which were lifted upon the altar, and then to the offering of Christ upon the cross.

There are two ways in which Socinus and his followers endeavour

to evade the force of the expression *ἀρνεῖται ἡμᾶς*. They admit that according to the usual sense of the verb the phrase is properly rendered as in our translation, "he bare our sins." But they say that, as the nature of the thing does not admit of a literal translation, we are to consider the phrase as equivalent to another which is used in different places by the apostle John, "his taking away sins," *i. e.* his leading us to forsake them. But it is a forced mode of interpreting Scripture, to have recourse to an unusual sense of a phrase, when that sense manifestly omits a part of the information given concerning the subject to which the phrase is applied. For although it be true that Jesus is said, John i. 29, 1 John iii. 5, *αἰρεῖν ἡμαρτίας*, yet the precise mode of taking them away is declared to be by bearing them; and although the scape-goat, which carried the sins of the children of Israel into the wilderness on the day of atonement, may be considered as a type of Christ's taking away sin, yet the scape-goat was only one part of the ceremonies prescribed for that day; and when all the ceremonies are laid together, if the scape-goat denoted that the sins were taken away, for the very same reason, the other goat which was killed on that day must be considered as a type of his blood being shed for sin.

The other way in which Socinus and his followers endeavour to evade the force of the expression *ἀρνεῖται ἡμᾶς*, is by saying that bearing our iniquities, if that translation be admitted, means nothing more than that they were the occasion of his suffering; as a person is said in the Old Testament to bear the sins of his ancestors, when he suffers calamities in his person or his fortune, which he would not have endured if they had been innocent. But this method of evading the natural sense of the phrase by no means answers the purpose for which it is resorted to. For it may be observed in general, that that part of the constitution of nature, by which posterity may be thus said to bear the sins of their ancestors, is in reality an extension of the punishment of sin, which is declared by God in the second commandment, "visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children." This extension of the punishment of sin demonstrates in a striking manner the painful nature of transgression, and calls in the natural affection of parents for their offspring as a guard to their own innocence. In every case therefore, where bearing the sins of others is allowed to mean suffering of which these sins are the occasion, that suffering is truly the punishment of sin. But with regard to this particular case, it is to be observed farther, that we are not left to suppose that the connexion between sin and the sufferings of Christ was incidental, or merely the result of the general constitution of nature: for we are taught by a variety of the most precise expressions, that this connexion was specially constituted by God, and that in it are to be found the reason and the intention of the sufferings of Christ. Isaiah says, "the chastisement of our peace was upon him;" but chastisement always means suffering connected with a fault, intended either for the correction of the person who endures it, or for an example to others. As chastisement which includes death cannot be designed to correct the sufferer, and as Jesus stood in no need of correction, the chastisement which he endured must be considered as exemplary; and its being called "the chastisement of our peace"

clearly means that the punishment, without which we could not be restored to peace with God, was borne by him. The same thing is more fully expressed by Isaiah, as his words are rendered by Bishop Lowth. "The Lord made to meet upon him the iniquities of us all. It was required of him, and he was made answerable."

There are two striking expressions to this purpose used by the apostle Paul. The one is in 2 Cor. v. 21. The apostle vindicates the personal innocence of his Master by saying, that he did not know sin. At the same time, in order to show that he was counted and treated as a sinner, not merely in the judgment of men, but in the judgment and by the appointment of God, he says, that God hath made him to be sin. This most significant manner of marking the connexion between his sufferings and sin is taken from the Septuagint, Lev. iv. 29 ; v. 9 ; where a sin-offering is often called ἁμαρτημα, ἁμαρτια, because it was offered for sin ; and the Latin writers intimate the same connexion in a similar manner, when they use *piaculum* both for the crime, *piacula commissa*, and for the victim by whose death the crime was supposed to be expiated.

The other expression of the apostle Paul is, Gal. iii. 10, 13. The reason assigned for the kind of death which Jesus died clearly implies a substitution for sinners. The Jews employed other methods of taking away the life of a criminal. But they did, in some cases, hang upon a tree the body of a person who had been put to death for a crime. They were forbidden by their law, however, to allow the body to remain all night upon the tree. Deut. xxi. 22, 23. "If a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree ; his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day, (for he that is hanged is accursed of God,) that thy land be not defiled." The reason of this order is plainly no part of the civil punishment ; that was completed by the death of the criminal, and by the infamy of his hanging upon a tree ; it is merely a declaration of the light in which the person who had suffered this civil punishment was viewed by God. The law also said, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." All men, as transgressors of the law, were subject to this curse ; and Jesus, in order to redeem them from the curse, was made a curse for them, by hanging on a tree ; for when we consider that he who had power to lay down his life, had certainly power to choose the manner of laying it down, and that the Scriptures expressly say, "he was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,"* we cannot but consider his choosing to hang upon a tree, a situation declared by the ceremonial law to be accursed of God, as intended to demonstrate to the world, that although he himself continued in all things written in the law to do them, his death was not merely the infliction of human law upon an innocent man, but a suffering which in the sight of God was penal.

By this variety of the most marked expressions do the Scriptures present to us the sufferings of Christ under the character of punishment, *i. e.* as suffering which could not from the nature of things, be

* Acts ii. 23.

the very punishment which the sinner deserved, but which was laid upon an innocent person for the sins of others.

3. To complete the argument in favour of the Catholic opinion which arises from a general survey of the language and views of Scripture, we have now to attend to the different classes of expression by which the effects of the sufferings of Christ are described.

1. The first class comprehends all those expressions in which the words reconciliation, propitiation, atonement, and making peace, are connected with the sufferings of Christ. Of this kind are the following: Col. i. 19, 20. 1 John ii. 2: iv. 10. Rom. iii. 25; v. 11. "It pleased the Father, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself. He hath set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood. By him we have now received the atonement."

The verbs translated reconcile are *καταλλάσσω*, *ἀποκαταλλάσσω*; and the noun rendered atonement is *καταλλαγή*. The verbs mean nothing more than a change from one state to another, but the situation in which they are introduced determines the change to be from enmity to friendship. The words rendered propitiation are derived from *ἱλάσχω*; a verb known in the Greek classics to denote *propitium reddo*, the action of the person, who in some appointed method, turned away the wrath of a deity; and a verb used by the authors of the Septuagint to express the action of the priest, who by presenting the sin-offering made atonement for the offerer. As these actions are precisely similar, both are expressed by the verb in the middle voice. Homer says, *οὐρῇ ἡμῖν Ἐκαεργον ἱλάσσειαι, ἱέρα βέξας*;^{*} and it is said of the priest in the Septuagint, *ἐξίλασται*, or *ἐξίλασται, περὶ ἁμαρτίας*.† But when the intercession of Moses had upon one occasion turned away the wrath of God, this is expressed by the verb in the passive, *ἱλάσθη Κυρίου*.‡ As the use of the verb *ἱλάσχω* in the Septuagint is thus exactly agreeable to the classical sense of it, it seems natural to understand, in the same sense, the words derived from that verb which are applied in the New Testament to express the effects of the death of Christ. The words are, *ἱλάσμενος*, which having been applied in the law to the sin-offering is applied 1 John ii. 2. and iv. 10. to our Saviour; and *ἱλαστήριον*, Rom. iii. 25, which may be rendered, as in our English Bible, propitiation, by supplying *θύμα*, but which from the analogy of *πρεσβύτιον*, *βουλευτήριον*, *συμπρεσβύτιον*, supplying *βήμα*, should rather be translated propitiatory or mercy-seat; a sense of the word which has been eagerly laid hold of by some of the Socinians, but which appears to be not less adverse to their system than the word propitiation, because the mercy-seat never was approached without blood. There is only one place in the New Testament, Heb. ii. 17, in which the verb *ἱλάσχω* is applied to our Saviour. Although the construction be not exactly the same as in the Septuagint, where the noun is governed by *περὶ*, it is plain that the sense of the verb is totally changed if it be translated, as the Socinians propose, taking away sin, *i. e.* destroying its power in the sinner; for here is a third person intervening between God and the sins of the people, whose action in turning away wrath is expressed, as in Homer and in the Septuagint, by the middle voice of *ἱλάσχω*.

^{*} Hom. Il. i. 147.

† Levit. v.

‡ Exod. xxxii. 11.

It appears then, that the amount of all the expressions, comprehended under the first class, is precisely that which the apostles have sometimes stated, when, speaking of the death of Christ, they say, "we are saved from wrath by him :—" and no person who reads the Scriptures can be at a loss to know what that wrath is. For although, in the refinement of some modern systems, it is counted a degradation of the Supreme Being to ascribe to him what has been called punitive justice, there are no views of the divine government more frequent or more clear in Scripture, than those upon which this attribute is rested. When we open the Old Testament, we find justice and judgment accompanying mercy in the descriptions of the Almighty, and many of the passages which have been quoted, in proof of the placability of the divine nature, contain this clause ; "who will by no means clear the guilty."* The history of the Old Testament abounds with examples, in which the hatred of sin often ascribed to the Almighty was made manifest by awful punishments of the wicked ; and one of these examples is thus interpreted by Jude ; Sodom and Gomorrah *προκεινται δειγμα, πρὸς αἰῶνιον δικὴν ὑπεχούσαι.*† John the Baptist introduces the new dispensation, by declaring that if any one believed not on the Son of God, *ἡ ὀργὴ Θεοῦ μένει ἐπ' αὐτόν.*‡ The character of the new dispensation is thus drawn by Paul, Rom. i. 18, *αποκαλύπτεται γὰρ ὀργὴ Θεοῦ ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἀσεβειαν καὶ ἀδικίαν ἀνθρώπων.* not a transient emotion, but a fixed purpose to punish transgression. This expression of the law, *ἐμοὶ ἐκδικησὶς, ἐγὼ ἀνταποδώσω,* is quoted as the principle of that punishment of which he shall be thought worthy who despises the gospel.§ Retributive justice is thus accurately described, 2 Thess. i. 6, *Εἰπερ δικαίον παρὰ Θεοῦ ἀνταποδοῦναι τοῖς θιβουσιν ὑμᾶς θλίψιν.* and although immediate and temporal calamities are not the standing method of executing retributive justice, as they were in part under the former dispensation, yet the future judgment which the gospel reveals, and unto which the wicked are said to be reserved, is called *ἡμεῖς ὀργῆς,* and is described both by our Lord and his apostles, in terms which imply the most complete display of what those who hold the Catholic opinion mean by the punitive justice of the Supreme Lawgiver.

Such are the descriptions of the Almighty which pervade the Scriptures, and they clearly explain to us that effect of the death of Christ which is marked by the first class of expressions. The gospel, proceeding upon the truth of these descriptions, assumes, as its principle, that without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins : and declaring that the blood of bulls and goats could not take away sins, it deduces from thence the necessity of a better sacrifice. It asserts, Heb. ii. 10, that it became him by whom and through whom are all things, to make the Captain of salvation perfect through sufferings ; *ἐξέπεν αὐτῷ, ἰ. e.* that there was a fitness in them resulting from the character of the Supreme Ruler ; and by representing them as vicarious punishment, with which reconciliation and atonement are connected, it teaches clearly that the wrath of God is turned away from the sinner, by the punishment which he deserved being laid upon another.

The Socinians endeavour to evade the argument drawn from the

* Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

† John iii. 36.

‡ Jude 7.

§ Heb. x. 28—30

first class of expressions, by maintaining that reconciliation means nothing more than the taking away the enmity which we entertained against God ; that it is nowhere said in Scripture that God is reconciled to us by Christ's death, but that we are everywhere said to be reconciled to God ; that the sufferings of Christ can produce no change in God, and that the change must be brought about in man ; that there can be no need of reconciling God to man, when he had already shown his love to man so far as to send his Son to reconcile man to God. But in addition to what has been said of the punitive justice of God, I would farther observe, that as the term which we translate reconciliation implies a previous enmity or variance which was mutual, so the Scriptures explicitly declare, by all those views of the Almighty which I have been collecting, that there was an enmity on God's part ; and the exhortation to lay aside the enmity on our part proceeds upon this foundation, that the enmity on God's part is taken away by the death of his Son. *διαλλαττεσθαι* and words connected with it are five times applied in the New Testament with respect to God : Rom. v. 10, 11 ; xi. 15 ; Ephes. ii. 16 ; Col. i. 20, 21. In this last passage particularly there is implied a previous enmity or variance which was mutual. The words are twice used with respect to man : Matt. v. 24 ; 1 Cor. vii. 11. In both these passages the meaning is, see that he be reconciled to thee ; for in both the person addressed has done the injury. The verb *διαλλαττεσθαι* occurs in the same sense in the Septuagint version of 1 Sam. xxix. 4. If you read 2 Cor. v. 18—21, the passage upon which the Socinians ground their argument, you will be satisfied that their method of interpreting reconciliation leaves out half its meaning. Here is a previous act of God, who hath reconciled all things to himself by Jesus Christ, who does not count to men their trespasses, and who committed to the apostles of Jesus the word or the ministry of reconciliation ; and subsequent to this act of God there is the execution of that ministry, by their beseeching men to be reconciled to God. The ministry is distinct from the act of God, because God does not immediately receive all sinners into favour by his Son, but requires something of those to whom the word of reconciliation is published, in order to their being saved by it. But the ministry could not have existed had not the act of God, reconciling all things to himself, previously taken place ; and accordingly the very argument by which the apostle urges the exhortation committed to him is this ; “ for he hath made him to be sin for us,” *i. e.* God hath provided a method by which we may be assured that his anger is turned away from us ; it only therefore remains that ye return to him.

2. The second class comprehends those expressions in which we read of redemption ; as 1 Peter i. 18 ; Eph. i. 7. “ Ye were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ ; we have redemption through his blood.” As our English word *redeem* literally means, I buy back, so *λυτρωω απολυτρωσις*, the Greek words used in the New Testament, are properly applied to the action of setting a captive free by paying *λυτρον*, a ransom ; and thus the sufferings of Christ are presented under the particular view of a price, by the payment of which we are set free.

Those who deny the truth of the Catholic opinion attempt to withdraw the support which it appears to receive from this class of expressions by the following reasoning. It is impossible, they say, to

apply these expressions in their literal acceptation to the effect of the sufferings of Christ. For as a ransom is always paid to the person by whom the captive is detained, and as we were the servants of Satan, these expressions, literally understood, would imply that the death of Christ was a price paid to Satan. Since we must depart from the literal sense, it seems most natural to understand redemption as equivalent to deliverance; for we read in the Old Testament of God's redeeming his people from trouble, from death, from danger, when no price is supposed to have been given; and Moses, who was the instrument employed by God to deliver his people from the bondage of Egypt, is called, Acts vii. 35, *λυτρωτής*. But if redemption means nothing more than a deliverance from sin, as effectually as if a ransom had been paid, the second class of expressions gives no real support to the Catholic opinion; and is not inconsistent either with the Socinian opinion, which ascribes the deliverance to the influence of the doctrine and precepts of the Gospel, or with the Middle opinion, which ascribes it to the power acquired by the Redeemer.

This reasoning proceeds upon a principle which is readily admitted, that both the English and the Greek words are often extended beyond their original signification. Although they denoted primarily deliverance from captivity by paying a ransom, they are applied to deliverance from any evil, and they are used to express deliverance by any means. Almost all other words, which originally denoted a particular manner of doing a thing, are susceptible of a similar extension of meaning, and it is the business of sound criticism to determine, by considering the circumstances of the case, how far the primary signification is to be retained, or with what qualifications it is to be understood in every particular application. Now when we judge in this manner of the second class of expressions, the following remarks naturally present themselves.

1. It is not necessary to depart from their literal meaning, when they are applied to the effect of the death of Christ. For according to the true statement of the Catholic opinion, we are considered as under the sentence of condemnation which our sins deserved, as prisoners waiting the execution of the sentence, and as released by the death of Christ from this condition. Deliverance from the dominion of sin and the power of Satan is a secondary effect, a consequence of the application of the remedy; redemption of our bodies from the grave is another effect still more remote. Both are mentioned in Scripture; but the immediate effect of the death of Christ is, our deliverance from punishment, what the apostle calls the curse of the law; and this punishment being in the power of the lawgiver by whom it was to be inflicted, the ransom, in consideration of which it is remitted and the condemned are set free, may be said to be given to him. 2. Although a captive may be released without any ransom, and although *λυω*, or verbs derived from *λυτρον*, may be employed most naturally to express such a gratuitous release, yet this extension of the primary meaning of these words is excluded from the case to which they are applied in the New Testament, because a *λυτρον* is there expressly mentioned. When a Greek author, in relating the release of a prisoner, speaks repeatedly of *απουα*, or *λυτρα*, as Homer does in the first book of the Iliad, it cannot be supposed that the re-

demption was without price. Every one feels this effect of introducing the noun *λυτρον*, when the captive was detained by force under the power of an enemy; and the significance of the noun is not in the least diminished, when the prisoner is redeemed from a captivity which the Scriptures represent as judicial. The *λυτρον* indeed, in that case, is not a price from which the lawgiver is to derive any advantage; it is the satisfaction to justice upon which he consents to remit the sentence; but still the mention of a *λυτρον* is absolutely inconsistent with a gratuitous remission. 3. The Septuagint has used the word *λυτρον* in two places, to denote the consideration upon which a judicial sentence was remitted. There was the *λυτρα ψυχης*, Exod. xxx. 12–16, called in our translation the atonement-money; half a shekel given for the service of the sanctuary, by every one who was numbered, upon all occasions when the number of the people was taken, that there might be no plague among them. There was also *λυτρα πρωτοτοκων*. The first-born of every animal was sacred to the Lord. But God declared, Numb. iii. 12, 46–51, that he took the whole tribe of Levi, instead of the first-born of all the tribes, on which account they are called *λυτρα πρωτοτοκων*; and as the whole number of the tribe of Levi fell short of the first-born males of all the other tribes by some hundreds, the Lord required for every one of this odd number the sum of five shekels, which is called in our translation, the redemption-money. in the Greek, *λυτρα των πλεοναζοντων*. Here, then, is *λυτρον*, which is known to denote in classical writers, a ransom paid in order to procure the release of a captive, applied in the Septuagint, by a most natural extension of meaning, to the consideration given for deliverance from death; an evil which the person so delivered could, in no other way, have escaped, any more than the captive could have recovered his liberty without the ransom; and the same idea is followed out in the New Testament. For as Paul says, 1 Cor. vi. 20, *ηγορασθητε τιμης*; and as Peter, i. 18, in describing the price, has a manifest reference to the atonement-money and redemption-money of the law, so the price by which we are bought and redeemed is called, Matt. xx. 28, *λυτρον αντιπολων*; and 1 Tim. ii. 6, *αντιλυτρον υπερ παντων*. Whether, then, we interpret the New Testament according to the classical Greek, or according to that which has been called the Hellenistical Greek, *i. e.* the Greek spoken by those Hebrews who, living mostly in the Grecian cities, used that universal language, but corrupted it by many Hebrew idioms; we cannot avoid considering the second class of expressions as suggesting that something was given for our deliverance. And thus, the second class of expressions, by which the Scriptures mark the effects of the death of Christ, exactly coincides as to its amount with the first. The first class represents the wrath which the sins of mankind deserved, as turned away by the sufferings which another endured; the second class represents prisoners under sentence of death for sin as set free, upon account of the sufferings by which another paid a ransom for their souls.

3. The third class comprehends all those passages, in which forgiveness of sins is connected with the death of Christ. The words commonly used in the Greek Testament for this purpose are *αφεμι* and *αφεσις*. The verb, which signifies *mitto a me*, may be applied in many different situations; the meaning is always understood to be qualified

by the circumstances of the case, and may easily be accommodated to that which we mean by forgiveness. For, as every sin involves an obligation to punishment, when the Lawgiver sends away from him the sin, he cancels the obligation and declares his resolution not to inflict the punishment which the transgression of his law deserved.

The Socinians argue from the frequent use of this expression in the New Testament, that forgiveness of sin is an act of the same kind with the remission of a debt. *Αφιημι* is applied, in classical writers, to both acts; for we read *αφιημι σε τον χρεος*, and *αφιημι σε τον εγκληματος* :* and our Lord seems to teach us that there is no difference between the acts by giving sins the name of debts, and applying to them under this name the verb *αφιημι*. Thus, one of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer is, *αφες ημιν τα οφειλματα ημων*; and in the parable, Matt. xviii. the Almighty is represented as a master who says to the servant that owed him ten thousand talents, *πασαν την οφειλην εκεινην αφηκα σοι*. This manner of expression certainly proceeds upon an obvious resemblance between the two subjects: the creditor has a perfect right to demand payment of his debt; the lawgiver has a perfect right to inflict punishment upon the transgression of the law; and therefore, when the one remits the debt, and the other forgives the transgression, they do what no person is entitled to require of them. But the New Testament, in order to guard us against inferring from this resemblance, that the act of the Supreme Lawgiver in forgiving sin is of the same kind with the act of a creditor who remits a debt without asking payment, connects the forgiveness of sins with the blood of Christ, which is elsewhere declared to have been shed as a punishment of sin. For it is not only said that remission of sins is one of the blessings of the new covenant preached in the name of Jesus, expressions which might be reconciled with the Socinian system that the Gospel is merely a declaration of forgiveness: but it is said, Acts xiii. 38, *δια τουτου*, through the means of this man, *ημιν αφεις αμαρτιων καταγγελλεται*. And the means employed by this man are explained in such passages as the following: 1 John i. 7, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin;" Rev. i. 5, "To him that washed us from our sins in his own blood." And still more expressly, Matt. xxvi. 28, and Ephes. i. 7: in which last passage the remission of sin is introduced as the explication of that redemption or release from the sentence of the law, which was purchased by the blood of Christ, and both are ascribed to the riches of the grace of God. It is plain therefore, that to the writers of the New Testament there did not appear any inconsistency between the forgiveness of sins and the laying the punishment of them upon another; and by declaring the intimate connexion between these two, they give their sanction to that leading principle in the statement of the Catholic opinion, which distinguishes the act of a lawgiver who in forgiving sins has respect to the authority of the law, from the act of a creditor who in remitting a debt disposes of his property at his pleasure.

4. The last expression by which the Scriptures mark the death of Christ is that in which we are said to be justified by his blood, and through faith in his blood.

* *Scapulae Lexicon*, in verb, *αφιημι*.

I mean not to speak at present of many questions respecting that act of God called justification, which will find their proper place under the application of the Gospel remedy. But as the change upon our condition, which is implied in the word justification, and which is ascribed to the efficacy of the blood of Christ, corresponds most exactly with the principles upon which the reasonableness of the Catholic opinion rests, I cannot better conclude the defence of that opinion, than by illustrating this particular view of the subject. And for that purpose I shall take, as the ground of my observations, that part of the apostle Paul's writings, in which he discourses fully of justification through the death of Christ, I mean Rom. iii. 19—31.

The word *δικαιωω* is used both in the Septuagint and in the Greek Testament, in a sense to which nothing perfectly analogous occurs in classical writers. The sense is called forensic, *i. e.* it expresses the act of a Lawgiver or judge pronouncing a person righteous in the eye of the law, so as to be acquitted from all obligation to punishment. Rom. viii. 33, *Τις εγχαλεσει κατα εκλεπτων Θεου; Θεος ο δικαιων. τις ο κατακρινων;* the word is used in the same sense by the Psalmist, Ps. cxliii. 2. *Και η εισελθης εις κρισιν μετα του δουλου σου, οτι ου δικαιωθησεται ενωπιον σου πας ζων.* The apostle, who had just been quoting the ancient Scriptures of the Jews, seems to have had this passage of the Psalms in his view, when he says, Rom. iii. 20, *διοτι εξ εργων νομον ου δικαιωθησεται πους αλλ' ενωπιον αυτου. δια γαρ νομον επιγνωις αμαρτιας.* This is the conclusion from the preceding part of his discourse, in which he has proved that all, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin, and the whole world *επιδικος τω Θεω*. It is plain therefore, that the justification or acquittal of men in the sight of God cannot arise out of the works of the law; for if, as the apostle has shown, a law was given by revelation to the Jews, and was written upon the hearts of the Gentiles, it would appear when they came before their Judge, that all of them knew what sin was, and therefore that all of them deserved to be condemned for being sinners. But how can those who deserve to be condemned as sinners be justified by a righteous God? The apostle had asserted, Rom. i. 17, that a method of doing this was revealed in the gospel: which method is the explication of that saying found in the law, "The just by faith shall live." But before he comes to illustrate and confirm his assertion, he throws in a long discourse, the purport of which is to show that there is not upon earth a person *δικαιος εξ εργων*, and therefore that if there is such a thing as justification, it cannot be *δια νομον*. Having established this point, which is the foundation of the gospel, he repeats his assertion in the 21st verse, with an addition, which he is now entitled to make; *χωρις νομον, i. e.* abstractedly from law, independently of the precepts contained in the Mosaic system, or written on the hearts of men; and yet not in opposition to the law, for this method of justifying men was witnessed, *i. e.* foretold and foreshown by the law and the prophets. The method of justifying men, which is independent of law, and yet was witnessed by the law, is called most significantly, *δικαιοσυνη Θεου*. The meaning of this name is in part explained by its being opposed, Rom. x. 3, to *ιδια δικαιοσυνη*. The apostle has shown that *ιδια δικαιοσυνη*, or, *δικαιοσυνη δια νομον*, Gal. ii. 21, does not exist; and therefore, the method of justifying men may most properly be called *δικαιοσυνη Θεου*, because it must be such as God is

pleased to appoint. But this name implies further that it is a method becoming that God who is just; a part of the significancy of the name which the apostle places fully in our view, when he comes to explain the method. But before he gives the explication, he distinguishes the method which he is going to explain from justification *ἐξ ἔργων* or *δια νόμου*, by this addition, *δια πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*; and he says it extends to all who believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, because in this respect there was no distinction between them, that all stood in need of the revelation of such a method, since by having sinned they had come short of that approbation which proceeds from God, and their actions, however agreeable to the maxims and customs of the world, could not, when tried in his righteous judgment, entitle them to a sentence of acquittal.

The necessity of a method of justifying men, not formerly revealed being now fully proved, and the method being discriminated from every other by the names applied to it, the apostle proceeds to illustrate the propriety of these names, by explaining what it is. His explication is found in the 24th, 25th, and 26th verses. The apostle has introduced into this short description the great principles upon which the reasonableness of the Catholic opinion rests, and the chief of those Scripture expressions by which the truth of it is proved. He begins with ascribing this method of justifying men to the free grace of God. As far as they are concerned, justification is granted to them *δωρεάν*, as a free gift; because their works did not entitle them to acquittal, and had it not been for the good-will of the Lawgiver, they must have been condemned. But this free gift is dispensed in a particular manner. The Lawgiver does not simply justify, but he justifies through the redemption that is in or by Jesus Christ. *Ἀπολυτρώσις* suggests that the *ὑποδικοι* were delivered from the execution of the sentence of the law by the payment of a ransom; and necessarily implies the good will of the ransomer. This interpretation of the word is confirmed by our being told immediately after, that the *ὑποδικοι* were delivered, not merely by the power, but by the blood of the ransomer; for the apostle adds, “whom God set forth, or exhibited to the world, *ἱλαστήριον δια τῆς πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι*.” Whether *ἱλαστήριον* be translated a propitiation or a propitiatory, the amount is the same. Either way his blood is the mean of turning away wrath; and we found formerly that there is not only consistency, but the most intimate connexion between his blood propitiating the lawgiver, and being the ransom by which the *ὑποδικοι* are set free.

The purpose for which God chose this particular manner of displaying his grace in justifying sinners is next mentioned. *Εἰς ἐνδείξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ*; *πρὸς ἐνδείξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ*. This repetition is a proof that the two intervening clauses are to be considered as a parenthesis, thrown in to illustrate the propriety of this method of declaring the righteousness of God. The intervening clauses are thus rendered in our translation; “for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God:” but they might be more literally rendered, “upon account of the passing by of former sins in the forbearance of God.” *Προγεγονότων* marks the sins committed before setting forth the propitiation, *i. e.* before the time of the Gospel. The *παρεσις* of these sins is rendered in our translation, the remission of

them; yet it is remarkable that the apostle does not here use *ἀφεσις*, the word used for remission, both by our Lord and by the apostle himself, at all other times, and formed from *ἀφίημι*, the verb used in the Septuagint for forgiving sin. It is probable that the apostle had a reason for this singularity; and many attempts have been made to find a reason in the different signification of the two words. The truth is, that the joining *ἀφεσις* and *παρεσις* to *ἁμαρτημάτων* is an application of both words, almost peculiar to the sacred writers; and that neither the etymology of *παριημι*, nor the practice of classical authors entitles us to say that it marks a less complete degree of forgiveness than *ἀφίημα*. This passage, therefore, gives no countenance to a system which has been formed with regard to the extent of the Gospel-remedy, that those who lived under the Mosaic dispensation, did not obtain entire deliverance from the punishment of sin till Christ came; and there is no other passage which warrants us to consider the forgiveness of sins committed before that period, as different in kind, with respect to its effects upon the sinner, from the forgiveness of sins committed after it. But when it is recollected that the sacrifices offered by the Jews did not purify the conscience, and that the heathen who had no direction from heaven often violated the laws of morality in the manner of offering their sacrifices, it is manifest that the forgiveness which was dispensed before the Gospel could not be in consideration of any satisfaction which was then made to the divine justice; and, therefore, that this time may be called *αὐσχὴ Θεοῦ*, a time of forbearance, or as the word is often rendered in classical writers, *induciae*, a truce, during which the punishments due to the sins of men were suspended in so far, that the human race was allowed to exist, and to enjoy the bounties of Providence, although the whole world was guilty before God; and many, whose names are mentioned in Scripture with honour, obtained forgiveness, although we cannot avoid considering them also as concluded under sin, because there is not a just man upon earth that liveth and sinneth not.

The forgiveness granted during this truce may most fitly be called *παρεσις*; because, however complete in respect of the persons to whom it was granted, it “sent by their side,” transmitted to another time, the punishment which their sins deserved. This interpretation of the word corresponds exactly with an expression of the same apostle in his discourse at Athens; Acts xvii. 30. *Τοὺς μὲν οὖν χρόνους τῆς ἀγνοίας ὑπερῶν ὁ Θεός, τάνν παρὰγγελλεῖ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πασι πανταχόθεν μετανοεῖν*. And these two expressions, when thus considered as explaining one another, place in a striking light the significancy of the two clauses which I called a parenthesis. A truce, during which, there was a suspension of the punishment due to sin, and the supreme Lawgiver overlooked transgressions, rendered the more necessary a demonstration of his justice; and therefore, in the time that now is, when the purposes for which the truce was continued so long are accomplished, and *το πᾶν χρόμα του χρόνου*, the fulness of time foretold by ancient prophets is arrived, he hath set forth his Son as a propitiation, who, in shedding his blood, endured the wrath due to sins which had been committed, to the end that God, when he now justifies graciously those who could not be justified by their own works, might appear to be righteous. Now we see that the sins which God appeared to pass

by in former times, when he granted forgiveness, were not forgiven without the shedding of that blood which was of infinitely greater value than the blood of bulls and goats, being the propitiation ordained and accepted of God, and in the fulness of time set forth, through faith in which all that believe are justified.

The apostle, after stating that boasting is effectually excluded by the method of justification which does not arise out of works, and that every charge of partiality in the Supreme Being is removed by the riches of that grace which extends without distinction to all that believe, subjoins, *νομον ουν καταργουμεν δια της πιστεως; μη γενοιτο· αλλα νομον εστωμεν.* The objection is a natural one. If the method of justifying men, which God has now set forth, is *χωρις νομου*, apart from law, we seem to render the law idle, useless; and we encourage men to transgress it. Far from it, answers the apostle. By the punishment, in this propitiation, of past sins that had seemed to be overlooked, and by justification through faith in the blood of Christ, we establish the law; for God thus demonstrates to the world that transgressors have no hope of escaping with impunity; whereas, if no such propitiation had been set forth, the impunity of the old world, and the justification of those who could not be justified by their own works, might have encouraged men to continue in sin.

Other interpretations of this passage have been given. But if it appears that by understanding every word in its natural and usual acceptation, we bring out a sense of the whole passage consistent with the context, and agreeable to other parts of the Apostle's writings, there is the strongest internal evidence that we have interpreted the apostle rightly; and, in that case, there is here an apostle of Jesus giving, in a full and formal discourse, the most explicit confirmation of the Catholic opinion. He presents to us the Supreme Being under the character of a lawgiver, and he states the death of Christ as an event intended to establish the law by exhibiting the punitive justice of the lawgiver. At the same time, far from considering this method of vindicating the divine authority as inconsistent with the love of God to man, he ascribes the justification which is thus dispensed, to the free grace of God. He does not, as the Socinians do, place the love of God in this, that he forgave sins without reference to any other being, but he says, Rom. v. 8, that "God commendeth his love to us, in that, while we were sinners, Christ died for us;" and he does not, like those who hold the middle opinion, rest our deliverance from the evils of sin merely upon the power acquired by our Redeemer, but, having presented, as we have seen, the death of Christ under the character of a punishment by which the justice of the lawgiver is demonstrated, he unfolds the same idea when he says, Rom. v. 9, 11, "Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him; and not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

Grotius de Satisfactione Christi.

Stillington on the Sufferings of Christ.

Clarke.

Tomkins' Jesus Christ the Mediator.

Elliot's Vicarious Sacrifice.

Law's Theory of Religion.

Warburton.

Macknight's Comm. on the Hebrews, and Essay on the Mediation of Christ.

Magee on the Atonement.

CHAPTER IV.

ETERNAL LIFE.

IN order to complete the view contained in the Catholic opinion of the nature of the Gospel remedy, we have yet to consider in what manner it connects the hope of life eternal with the interposition of Jesus Christ.

According to the Socinian opinion, Jesus Christ is simply the messenger who brought from God, together with the assurance of pardon, the promise of life eternal to all who repent; and according to the middle opinion, he received from his Father, in recompense for his sufferings, the power of giving eternal life, so that all those who receive this inestimable gift receive it upon his account as the partakers of his reward. There is another opinion upon this subject found amongst the many hypotheses with which the works of the ingenious and eccentric Bishop Warburton abound. It is mentioned occasionally in former parts of his works, and from him it descended to Bishop Hurd, and some of his other admirers amongst the English clergy; but he reserved the full elucidation of it to the ninth book of the *Divine Legation of Moses*, which was published by Bishop Hurd after his death, as a supplement to his works. This ninth book, which professes to be an attempt to explain the nature and genius of the Christian religion, and “to furnish the key or clue which is to open to us, and to lead us through all the recesses and intricacies of the last dispensation of God,” unfolds with much pomp, but with a very slender degree of evidence, the following system, the amount of which may be given in a few words. Warburton considers pardon on repentance as a doctrine of natural religion, which is published indeed in the Gospel, but which did not in any measure depend upon the vicarious sacrifice of Christ, because the law of nature teaches us that repentance is the means of recovering the favour of God, when it has been forfeited by a breach of that law. So far he coincides with the Socinians. But he differs from them in asserting, and in proving most ably, that the death of Christ was truly a vicarious sacrifice; and the peculiarity of his system lies in his finding room for the necessity of such a sacrifice, although he contends that from the principles of natural religion it may be collected that God will, on the sincere repentance of offenders, receive them again into favour. The place which he finds for it is this. Immortal life, he says, is a thing extraneous to our nature; not necessarily inferred from the relation between the Creator and the creature; and no part of the natural reward of good conduct. It was not conferred upon man when he was first created, but was the sanction of that particular covenant which God made with our first

parents some time after their creation ; when he placed them in the garden of Eden. It is a free gift which was originally suspended upon the condition of obeying a positive command, which was forfeited by the transgression of that command, and which is restored in the Gospel. The whole character of the Gospel, according to Warburton, lies in this, that it is the restoration of the free gift of immortality ; and faith in the blood of the Son of God is the positive command, upon which God the giver has been pleased to suspend his gift. Abstinence from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the condition of the original grant ; faith in the blood of the Son of God, as a vicarious sacrifice, is the condition upon which the restoration of the grant is suspended ; both are positive commands, deriving all their value from the pleasure of him who appointed them, but for that very reason both are indispensable conditions of the gift.

If there is any truth in the principles upon which we rested the doctrine of atonement, this account of the Gospel is a most incomplete theory ; and I have mentioned it only because the contrast may serve to illustrate that part of the Catholic opinion which I am now going to state. In Warburton's system, the gift of immortality which was purchased by the sufferings of Christ is detached from the pardon preached in his name, the former being peculiar to the Gospel, the latter being the common doctrine of natural religion ; and redemption and justification are appropriated, in this system, to the price paid and accepted for the particular gift of eternal life, without being supposed to have any reference to the means of restoring the sinner to the favour of God in general. The Catholic opinion on the other hand, takes the gift of eternal life which is the termination of the remedy, in connexion with all the steps that prepare and qualify us for the termination ; and, by thus embracing the whole of the Gospel revelation, instead of forming a system upon a partial view, it both appears to give a natural interpretation of the separate branches, and also derives much support from the harmony with which they unite.

There is not in this part of the Catholic opinion that opposition to other systems which we found in the former part. The Catholic opinion agrees with the Socinian as to the promise of eternal life, which God has given us in Christ ; with the middle as to the power of the Redeemer in conferring it ; with Warburton's system as to the free restoration of that which had been forfeited, and could not be claimed. But it differs from all the three in comprehending points which they omit, and in marking connexions which they overlook ; and therefore, I have not here to engage in that kind of controversial discussion which was necessary in stating the doctrine of atonement, but merely to give a delineation of what those who hold the Catholic opinion consider as a complete account of the nature of the Gospel remedy.

The foundation of the hope of eternal life is laid in what the Scriptures call reconciliation. For if all men are under the sentence of condemnation, and so children of wrath, that sentence must be reversed in order to their being delivered from wrath, before they can look forward with the expectation of good to other states of being. This order is beautifully stated by the apostle Paul in several passages, such as the following. Rom. v. 1, 2, "Therefore being justified by

faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, *ἐν* whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." The condemnation pronounced upon the first transgression included a sentence of death; "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return;" a sentence which although not immediately executed upon the transgressors, has ever since retained its power over their posterity; for death, which entered into the world by sin, *διηλθε*, passeth upon all men. If this event, which withdraws men from their abode upon earth, and puts an end to the present exertion of their faculties, were in reality, what it appears to be, the termination of their existence, the evils introduced by sin could not be said to receive a remedy, because this part of the sentence of condemnation, although suspended for a little, would in the end be fully executed. The Gospel, therefore, professing to bring a remedy for these evils, and yet not professing to deliver men from returning to the dust, reveals a resurrection of the body from the dust, with which it is mingled after death, and thus opens to man the possibility of receiving hereafter, in his whole nature, that complete remedy which is not administered here. This prolongation of existence, beyond the period when it is forfeited by that sentence to which all the posterity of Adam are subject, may be stated as the first branch of the reversal of the sentence; and in the New Testament it is uniformly ascribed to the interposition of Jesus. Heb. ii. 14, "He took part of flesh and blood *ἵνα διὰ τοῦ θανάτου καταργήσῃ τὸν τοῦ κρείττους ἐχόντα τὸν θάνατον, τοῦτεστι τὸν διαβόλον*; that through death he might render unavailing the power of him who has the power of death." 2 Tim. i. 10, *καταργήσαντος μὲν τὸν θάνατον, φωτισαντος δὲ ζῶν καὶ ἀθάνατον διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου*. 1 Cor. xv. 57, "Thanks be to God who hath given us the victory over death through our Lord Jesus Christ."

It is not meant by these expressions that the world had no hope of immortality till Jesus came. From the beginning of the world, in all countries, and in every state of society, men have looked forward to another life. Although the promise of life eternal formed no part of the sanction of the law of Moses, yet the hope of such a life is often expressed in the Psalms, and by the prophets: it had become a part of the national faith of the Jews before Jesus came, and we find both our Lord and his Apostles adducing proofs of a future state out of their ancient Scriptures. Jesus, therefore, is said to have brought life and immortality to light, not that he was the first who taught it,—not merely because his manner of teaching it was free from the obscurity and hesitation which appeared in every former teacher who spoke of this subject,—but principally because that which he did took away the obstacles which no other had power to remove. Death intervenes by a judicial sentence between the present life and that future life for which man looks. No other teacher had authority to say that this judicial sentence would be reversed by a restoration of the life which it took away. But Jesus, having by his death procured an acquittal from the sentence, renders death ineffectual for the purpose of preventing the future life of man; so that immortality when taught by him may be as readily embraced and as firmly believed as if death did not intervene.

But, although an acquittal from the sentence of death is necessary

in order to our future existence, the hope of what we call life eternal does not necessarily arise from this acquittal. For mere existence in a future state, even when supposed to be free from those pains which would render it a curse instead of a blessing, does not satisfy the desires of the human soul. In looking forward to other states of being, it pants for enjoying there the happiness of its nature; and it is manifest that there is a wide difference between a prolongation of life after it had been forfeited, and a right to the greatest blessing which the Father of spirits can bestow—the perpetual enjoyment in his presence of those benefits which he may resume when he will, and of a measure of them supposed to be infinitely superior to all that he is seen at present to bestow. It is agreed, therefore, by Christians of all denominations, that what we call eternal life is the gift of God; an expression which they have learnt from the Apostle Paul, who uses it in a situation which shows that he meant to give it all its significance. Rom. vi. 20. “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God, *το χαρισμα του Θεου*, is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The hope of a gift does not go beyond probability without a promise from the giver; and therefore all Christians agree in considering eternal life as the promise which God hath promised us. But those who hold the Catholic opinion are distinguished from the Socinians, by connecting this promise with that which Christ has done, *i. e.* by considering this gift of God as not only promised to men by Jesus Christ, but as given them upon his account. In this respect, the Catholic and the middle opinions appear to agree. But while the middle opinion considers this gift as conferred by the power of the Redeemer upon those whom he chooses to make the partners of his reward, the Catholic opinion establishes a more intimate connexion between our right to eternal life, and that which was done by our Saviour upon earth.

Concerning the nature of this connexion, there is some variety in the language of those who hold the Catholic opinion. A distinction has been made between the passive and the active obedience of Christ. Those who made the distinction, understood by the passive obedience of Christ all the sufferings which he underwent for our sins; by his active obedience, all the piety, resignation, humility, and benevolence, which rendered his life the most perfect pattern of righteousness. The former being penal were considered as the satisfaction to the justice of God; the latter, being a fulfilment of the law which says, “the man that doeth them shall live in them,” were considered as meritorious of a reward. It was said therefore, that we are saved from wrath by the sufferings of Christ, and that we acquire a right to eternal life through the merits of his obedience. But, in this, as in many other instances, an attempt was made to distinguish things naturally indivisible. The passive and the active obedience of Christ cannot be disjoined. For in all that Jesus suffered there was obedience to God and good will to man, and the virtues of his character were illustrated and enhanced by the situation in which he displayed them.

The great body of Catholic divines, therefore, have followed the sacred writers, to whom this distinction is altogether unknown. They generally ascribe our redemption to the blood of Christ, because his

death was the most illustrious act of obedience, and the conclusion of the life which for our sakes he had led upon earth; but they show us by various expressions, that they do not exclude the efficacy of the sorrows and the virtues of that life. Thus the Apostle says, Rom. v. 19, "By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous;" an expression which does not, as those who hold the middle opinion maintain, resolve the sufferings which we call penal merely into a virtuous exertion, but which conjoins this last act with all the submission to God displayed by Jesus from his incarnation *μεχρὶ θανάτου*. Phil. ii. 8. In like manner, the Scriptures, in order to show that the efficacy of the death of Christ was not confined to the deliverance from punishment, which is generally spoken of as the immediate effect of that event, represent it in different places as having procured for us also eternal life. Heb. ix. 12, 15, "By his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. He is the mediator of the new testament, that, by means of death, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." 1 Thess. v. 9, 10, "Christ died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep," *i. e.* whether we be found alive or dead at the general resurrection, "we should live together with him."

Thus, in the language of the New Testament, Acts xxvi. 18, *ἀπεσις ἁμαρτιῶν* and *κλήρος ἐν τοῖς ἡγιασμένοις* are conjoined as flowing together from the interposition of Christ: and agreeably to this language, the active and passive obedience of Christ, words seldom used in modern times, are considered as constituting together what are called his merits,—what the Apostle, Rom. v. 18, calls *ἐν δικαίωμα*, which he opposes to the *ἐν παραπτώμα* of Adam. He does not mean one single act of Jesus, but the merit or righteousness arising out of all his actions and all his sufferings taken in one complex view, through which righteousness the free gift comes upon all men, *εἰς δικαιοσύνην ζωῆς*. For Jesus who was infinitely blessed and glorious in himself, and who, possessing all things from the beginning, was incapable of receiving a personal reward, undertook that economy which the Scriptures reveal for our sakes; and all the merit arising out of the execution of it is imputed or transferred to us, *i. e.* counted as ours, so that we derive the benefit of it. He was made "sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Cor. v. 21. The same thing is expressed, Gal. iv. 4, 5. Jesus was made under the law in two respects; in respect of the sanction of the law, the curse due to transgressors which he endured, and in respect of the precepts both of the ceremonial and of the moral law which he fulfilled. In his sufferings and in his actions, he did the will of his Father; and this obedience, being yielded in the human nature which he assumed in order to accomplish our deliverance, is considered as yielded in our stead and for our sakes; the merit of it is counted to those to whom the remedy of the Gospel is applied, so that upon account of it we are both delivered from the curse of the law, and "receive the adoption of sons." This last expression, which is commonly used in the New Testament to mark the change produced upon the condition of Christians by Christ's having made peace, manifestly includes that right to eternal life which they acquire through him. From enemies they become "children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God,

and joint heirs with Christ.” Heaven is the house of their Father, their city, their country, or, as our Lord has expressed it, “the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world,” which they are called to inherit.

But, if that account of the effect of Adam’s transgression upon which the Catholic opinion proceeds be founded in Scripture, his posterity are not qualified to take possession of this inheritance. The corruption which they inherit from their ancestor, being an estrangement from the fountain of life, upon which account it is known by the name of spiritual death, is diametrically opposite to that intimate communion with God implied in life eternal; and as this corruption is sufficient, independently of all outward evils, to make men wretched upon earth, so, if it were carried with them beyond the grave, they would find, even in that state where pure spirits enjoy supreme felicity, the misery inseparable from sin. That the remedy, therefore, may correspond to the extent of the disease, and that Jesus may truly accomplish the purpose for which it is said he was manifested by destroying the works of the devil, it is not enough that he abolished death, or rendered death ineffectual for preventing the future life of man, and purchased by his merits an everlasting reward; his religion must also confer upon his followers those qualifications and dispositions by which they may be meet for entering into life. Whether this change upon the character of men is accomplished by the moral influence of doctrine, precept, and example, or by the efficacious influence of the Spirit, and how this last, which the Scriptures seem to declare, can be reconciled with that liberty which enters into all our conceptions of an accountable agent, are questions which belong to that division of our subject which I called the application of the remedy. But that there is such a change, in whatever manner it be effected, is unequivocally declared in such expressions as the following. All those whom Christ delivers from punishment, and to whom he gives a right to eternal life, are “made free from sin;” they “become the servants of God;” they “put off the old man which is corrupt;” they “put on the new man which is renewed after the image of God;” they are “dead unto sin, and alive unto God through Jesus Christ; a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”* These expressions, and many others of the same kind, paint a character of mind, and a general tenor of life, which constitute the beauty, the health, and dignity of the human soul, and from which there result that “peace which passeth all understanding” here, and the capacity of enjoying supreme felicity hereafter.

From what has been said the propriety is evident, with which the two words salvation and redemption are employed to denote eternal life purchased by Christ; as Heb. v. 9, “being made perfect he became the author of eternal salvation, *αἰῶνος σωτηρίας αἰώνιον*, unto all them that obey him.” And Heb. ix. 12, “having obtained eternal redemption, *αἰώνιον λύτρωσιν εἰσάμενος*.” As the happiness of heaven is obtained for us in the same manner with the acquittal from the sentence of condemnation, and is the entire removal of the evils which sin had introduced, this completion of the undertaking of the Redeemer is most

* Rom. vi. Ephes. iv. 21—24. Titus ii. 13, 14.

fitly designed by the words which primarily denoted the acquittal : and the epithet *αιωνιος* is significant of the very same thing which John has expressed in the description of the city of the living God, where the tree of life grows, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations ; Rev. xxii. 3, *Και παν καταναθema ουκ εσται επι, i. e.* the curse pronounced upon man, when he was driven from the tree of life, is completely removed when he is re-admitted to it, and it shall return no more.

Thus Jesus, by giving what is called Rev. xxii. 14, “a right to the tree of life,” does indeed destroy the works of the devil : he is the second Adam, who restores all that the first had forfeited ; and the completeness of the remedy which he brought cannot be better expressed than in the words of Paul, Rom. v. 21, “that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

We have now seen the manner in which the hope of eternal life, or a right to the tree of life, is connected with what Christ did upon earth. But a right so infinitely above their deserts, conferred by the free grace of God upon those who were under sentence of condemnation, transcends all our experience of the divine goodness, and all our conceptions of generosity : and therefore, “God, willing to show more abundantly unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel,” hath confirmed this right by all the discoveries given in Scripture of the present condition of that person from whose merits it is derived.

The resurrection of Jesus may be mentioned as the first branch of the confirmation of that right acquired for us by his death. Had Jesus, after dying for our sins, continued under the power of the grave, doubts must have arisen in every mind impressed with a sense of guilt, whether his blood was able to take away the sins of the world. But when all the sufferings which he endured as the punishment of sin were concluded by his being restored to life, here was a fact presented to the senses of mankind, containing plain and incontestible evidence that the effects ascribed to his sufferings were attained ; because the Supreme Lawgiver, in loosing him from the pains of death, declared that he accepted that atonement which his death offered. Accordingly it is said, Rom. iv. 25, that Christ “was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification :” *i. e.* we know by his resurrection that we who had offended are, upon account of his sufferings, accounted righteous before God ; and it is said, 1 Pet. i. 3, that “God hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ;” *i. e.* his resurrection is an experimental assurance of our victory over death.

But the Scriptures reveal much more than the resurrection of Jesus, or his bare return to life : and the full security given in the Gospel for our attaining the exalted reward, which is included in the complete redemption procured by his death, is found in all the circumstances that are revealed concerning the life which he now lives with God. For if, as the apostle reasons, Rom. v. 10, “when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son ; much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life ;” *i. e.* if his death

had the effect of propitiating the divine wrath, much more shall his life insure eternal salvation to those who are now no longer enemies. Eternal life having been acquired for us by the death of Christ, and yet being a distant reward, the Gospel affords us this most satisfying security for its being at length conferred, that the person who died to acquire it is alive for evermore, and has the keys of hell and of death.*

It is not necessary, in this place, to dwell upon the illustration of the various points which belong to this subject. I shall only bring them together in one view, to show distinctly how they unite in constituting that security of which I now speak.

Jesus Christ, who gave his flesh for the life of the world, is himself the giver of life. He is revealed as the Creator of the world, from whom the life of all the inhabitants of the earth originally proceeded. He displayed upon earth the power of raising from the dead whom he would; he directs us to consider these occasional exertions as a specimen of that power with which he shall raise all men at the last day; and he says that "power is given him over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him."† There can be no doubt, therefore, that the Son of God, "who hath life in himself, is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him."

That he is willing to exert his power in giving eternal life to those whom he redeemed, is an inference clearly deduced from his death. A Being, who did the will of the Father, in dying that we might live through him, who revived that he might be Lord of all, and whose purposes do not admit of alteration, either from the mutability of his own mind, or from external opposition, cannot be conceived to leave unfinished the gracious purpose for which he suffered, but will in due time put us in possession of the right which he acquired for us at such a price.

The force of this inference is illustrated by the various language in which the Scriptures express the intimate connexion between Christ and the persons for whom he died. They are those whom God hath given him; the subjects of his kingdom; the members of his body; the flock which he gathers into his fold, and which he defends from every enemy; his sheep who hear the voice of the good shepherd, and follow him. In the felicity which this peculiar people, whom he hath purchased for himself by his own blood, attain through him, he sees the travail of his soul; and the praises which are represented in the book of the Revelation, as proceeding from the company which he hath redeemed to God, publish the glory of his name to the whole intelligent creation. He was not ashamed to call them brethren, for he took part with them of flesh and blood; and even now that he is set down on the right hand of God, he has not laid aside the nature which he assumed; for he is still called the Son of Man. He appears in the presence of God for us, a merciful and faithful high priest; and, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, he maketh intercession for us, and is our advocate with the Father. Not that he uses any words

* Rev. i. 17, 18.

† John xvii. 2.

to move God ; but that, in virtue of the blood which he shed on the cross, and with which he is said now to sprinkle the mercy-seat in heaven, he procured us access to the Father, and presents our prayers and services, which, when offered in his name, are “ spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by him.”

The high priest of the Jews entering upon the day of atonement into the holy of holies, with the blood of the bullock and the goat, and with the names of the children of Israel upon his breastplate, was a striking type of the intercession of Christ. But there are two essential points in which the antitype excels the type. The one is, that the high priest of the Jews entered once a-year upon a stated day ; but the intercession of Jesus continueth for ever, (Heb. vii. 24, 25,) so that at all times we may “ come boldly to the throne of grace.” The other is, that none but the high priest ever entered ; whereas Jesus, who entered into the true holy place, after having obtained eternal redemption, has, by his entering, opened and made manifest a way for us. He is our forerunner, *προδρομος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν*, Heb. vi. 20 : our hope “ entereth into that within the veil,” whither he is gone ; and although we yet remain in the outer court while he is making intercession, we know assuredly from his words, that where he is, there shall also his servants be.* This assurance is confirmed by the nature of the blessings which his intercession procures. When he ascended on high, he received gifts for men, which are continually imparted to those who derive from him a right to eternal life. The Holy Spirit, by whom these gifts are distributed, is called the Spirit of Jesus, and is said to be sent by him ;† and he is not only the source of comfort, and the cherisher of hope, but he is expressly styled, Eph. i. 14, *ἀρραβὼν τῆς κληρονομίας ἡμῶν*, “ the earnest of our inheritance.” The significance of this expression will appear by attending to the difference between an earnest and a pledge. A pledge is a security for some future payment, which is delivered up as soon as the payment is made ; and therefore it may be, and generally is, of a kind totally different from the payment. An earnest is a part of the payment given as an acknowledgement that the whole is due, the same in kind with that which is to follow. In this sense the Spirit is called the earnest of our inheritance, because the life formed upon earth by the influences of the Spirit is the temper of heaven already begun in the soul. It is much more than a preparation for heaven : it is an assurance which a Christian has within himself, given to him by the Lord of life, that he shall certainly reach heaven. For as the apostle speaks, Col. iii. 3, 4, that life which we lead is supported by the invisible influences of the Spirit, whom Christ, who sits on the right hand of God, sends in the hearts of his people. The springs of this life are withdrawn from the eyes of men ; but they are hidden with Christ ; and they will become manifest at that time, when he by whom we live shall appear, and we, who have risen with him to a new life, shall be partakers of his glory.

While Christians are thus sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption, Jesus is in heaven preparing a place for them. He

* John xiv. 3.

† 1 Pet. i. 11. John xv. 26.

directs by the power that is committed to him every event for the good of that church which he purchased for himself; and when all the purposes of divine Providence are accomplished, he shall be revealed from heaven as the judge of men. We are to appear before the tribunal of him who died, that we might live, and we are to receive from his hands the crown of life.

The particulars which I have now brought together, unfold the full amount of that expression of Peter, "Thou hast the words of eternal life:"* and of that expression of John, "this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son."† It was purchased for us by him; the power of conferring it resides in him; he prepares us for it, and he will at length bestow it.

From this view of the connection between the hope of eternal life, and the interposition of Christ, there arises also the significancy of that name which is given to him, the mediator of the New Testament, the mediator between God and man; μεσσητης. Heb. ix. 15. 1 Tim. ii. 6. He is not merely *Inter-nuncius Dei*, the messenger who, coming from God to man, declared the divine purpose; but he is a person, who, standing in the middle between God and his offending creatures, offers on our part a satisfaction to the divine justice, and brings us from God an assurance that the satisfaction is accepted. He becomes in this way, Heb. vii. 22, *καρτεροτος διαθηκης εγγυος*, the surety of a better covenant, which being confirmed by the death of the surety, acquires the nature of a testament, an irrevocable deed, because the death loses its effect unless the blessings of the covenant are conferred upon those for whom the surety died. Yet by his reviving after he died, he becomes himself the dispenser of these blessings, and is in this most eminent sense a mediator, that having procured us access to the Father by his death, he ever lives to make intercession. His mediation is effectual, because it proceeds upon the merit of what he did for our sakes; all the riches of divine grace are connected with this merit; and the nature of the gospel remedy may be thus described according to the Catholic opinion:—it is pardon and eternal life, or a complete redemption from the evils of sin, obtained and conferred through the mediation of a person, who having offered himself a sacrifice for sin, and being now set down at the right hand of God, is emphatically styled "the Captain of Salvation, the author and finisher of faith."

To those who have a slight impression of the nature of that condition which called for the remedy, there may appear to be a superfluity of condescension in this mediation. But they who think of the fears and suspicions which are natural to guilt, which are often described in Scripture, and which are there confirmed by an awful exhibition of the punitive justice of the Lawgiver, will perceive the utility and fitness of all that provision which is made for overcoming the distrust and reviving the hopes of those who are justified by the blood of Christ. By the gracious condescending views which are given of the present condition of that person who died for sins, in

* John vi. 68.

† 1 John v. 11.

order to procure for men the most glorious regard, the gospel becomes the religion of those to whom it is addressed, the humble, the contrite, the poor in spirit: and by Jesus, we “believe in God, who raised his Son from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.”*

* 1 Pet. i. 21.

CHAPTER V.

EXTENT OF THE REMEDY.

HAVING treated of the nature of the remedy which the gospel brings, I proceed now to give an account of the different opinions which have been held concerning the extent of that remedy. But before I enter upon the controverted questions on this subject, I wish to direct your attention to two preliminary points. In the first all Christians agree; and the differences respecting the second do not distinguish any great bodies of Christians, but are confined to a few individuals.

SECTION I.

THE first preliminary point is, that the gospel appears framed and designed by God to be the religion of the whole human race.

As the Almighty Father made of one blood all nations to dwell upon the face of the earth, we cannot suppose that the paternal affection, with which he looked down upon those whom he formed after his own image, will be in the smallest degree affected by the varieties of climate and situation; and all the conceptions of enlightened reason lead us to presume, that if their moral state render them the objects of his compassion, the exercise of that compassion will not be bounded by any lines so capricious as those which the confines of different states mark upon the globe. Accordingly, the declaration made by the Almighty immediately after the first transgression intimates by the form of the expression, an idea most becoming the sovereignty of Him who speaks, that all the children of Adam were somehow to partake of the fruits of that victory which the seed of the woman was to gain over the tempter, and the promise made to Abraham, that in his seed all the families of the earth were to be blessed, conveys the most explicit assurance, that, at some future time, a dispensation, commensurate in extent with the population of the earth, was to proceed from the descendants of Abraham.

The dispensation given by Moses to the posterity of the patriarch was of a very different kind. It was confined, by the terms of its promulgation, to the land of Judea: the various ceremonies which it prescribed were such as the inhabitants of countries remote from Jerusalem could not perform; and the object of all the institutions was to preserve, in a small district, a peculiar people, holy unto the Lord;

while the rest of the world were left in ignorance and idolatry. The partiality, from which this local dispensation appears at first sight to have flowed, is a favourite subject of declamation with deistical writers. It is stated as an unanswerable proof that the Jewish religion is unworthy of the Supreme Being. The boasted peculiarity of the children of Israel is ranked by these writers amongst the other forms of superstition, which national vanity and a concurrence of circumstances maintained for ages in particular districts; and as Jesus and his apostles assert the divine authority of Moses, and build Christianity upon the law given by him, their claims of being the messengers of Heaven are represented as very much shaken by this degradation of Judaism.

This plausible objection is fully answered in all the able defences of Christianity; particularly by Leland, in his *View of Deistical Writers*, and by Clarke, both in his *Evidences of Religion*, and in some of his *Sermons*. The subject is also treated in *Shaw's Philosophy of Judaism*; in *Law's Considerations on the Theory of Religion*; in *Jortin's Discourses on the Truth of the Christian Religion*; in *Warburton's Divine Legation of Moses*; and in various treatises on the harmony of the divine dispensations. I shall endeavour to state, in a short compass, the idea which these writers have fully elucidated.

The children of Israel were not distinguished by a special revelation upon account of any peculiar excellence of character, which rendered them, more than other nations, the objects of the divine favour; but they were raised up, in the wisdom of Providence, as the instruments of preserving in the world, amidst abounding idolatry, the knowledge and worship of the true God, and of conveying to future ages the hope of that Deliverer who had been promised from the beginning. To qualify them for this important office, they were separated from the surrounding heathen by circumcision, by a burdensome ritual, and by many express prohibitions against intermarrying with their neighbours. But it was not meant that they should remain unknown. The geographical situation of the land, which God had given them, brought them within the view of those nations who make the most conspicuous figure in ancient history. The commerce which they were obliged to maintain with other nations, the fortunes of some individuals of that chosen race, and many circumstances in the history of the nation, particularly their captivities and their dispersions, drew the attention of the world to the singularities of their establishment. Some knowledge of their law was, by these means, carried abroad; and from the land of Judea, as from a light shining in a dark place, there proceeded rays, which, in the midst of heathen superstition, prevented the darkness from being universal. It is difficult to estimate the degree of aid which the efforts of human reason derived from the revelation granted to the people of Israel. But the researches of Bryant, in his *Ancient Mythology*, and of other learned men, seem to place it beyond doubt, that this aid was more considerable than a superficial uninformed observer would apprehend. And when we consider the successive changes in the political state of the Jews, and the situation of the Roman empire at the time of the birth of that extraordinary personage, of whom

there had been a general expectation, there appears to be the best reason for regarding the whole conduct of the Almighty towards his chosen people, as part of that preparation by which he opened to the world the universal and spiritual religion, which, in the fulness of time, was published by his Son,—a preparation, which in none of its parts was so rapid as to our imaginations may appear desirable, but which it would be presumptuous in us, upon that account, to pronounce unsuitable to the circumstances of the case.

The law of Moses, then, was a local dispensation intervening between the promise made to Abraham, that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, and the fulfilment of the promise. It originated in the promise; it announced the great event, which was the accomplishment of the promise, and it terminated with that event. A great part of the study of a Christian divine lies in tracing the connexion between the preparatory dispensation, and that to which it pointed; and the more intimately that he is acquainted with this connexion, the better able will he be to vindicate the God of the Jews from the charge of partiality. One thing is obvious, that this narrow confined religion gave notice of a dispensation that was to be universal. David says, in Psalm xxii. which is a continued prophecy of the Messiah, “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the Lord; all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him;” and the succession of Jewish prophets intimate, by various expressions, that the partial instruction, which the law of Moses afforded, was to be succeeded by a kind of teaching not confined to any one people, but under which nations that had been strangers to the true God were to know and worship him.

It is true that the national vanity of the Jews, flattered by their peculiar privileges, gave other interpretations of such prophecies. They either conceived that the dispensation of the Messiah, by subjecting the nations of the earth to their dominion, was to exalt them to the empire of the world, then held by the Romans; or, if their minds did rise to some conception of a spiritual change upon the world, it went no further than this, that other nations were to exchange the idolatry in which they had been educated for an observance of the ceremonies given of old from Mount Sinai. They did not think that the chosen people of God could ever be made to descend to that equality with the heathen, which is implied in supposing that the offerings made in other countries are as acceptable to God as those presented at Jerusalem. Far less did it occur to their minds that the whole city was to be laid waste, and the temple of Solomon razed to the ground: and that this effectual abolition of the ceremonies of the law was to prepare the world for receiving a spiritual religion, clearly discriminated from that local system. These prejudices of the Jews, founded upon a literal interpretation of their own sacred books, and possessing the minds of all ranks, required much attention at the first publication of the gospel. For Jesus appeared as the Messiah of the Jews, claiming to be that Son of David whom their prophets had described as a mighty prince; and his religion, deriving a great part of its internal evidence from its perfect consistency with that former revelation of which it is the fulfilment, was to go forth from Judea to enlighten the ends of the earth. The order

of Providence, then, required that Christianity should be preached first to the Jews ; and it was necessary that, if they did not embrace the promise made to their fathers, the manner of its being preached to them should be such as to render their infidelity inexcusable, and to vindicate the justice of the severe punishment ordained for their nation.

This is the key to a great part of the New Testament ; and I do not know any views which persons who expound the Scriptures to the people have more frequent occasion to bring forward and to apply, than those which I have now stated. From these views we derive the reason of our Lord's confining his personal ministry to the Jews, and forbidding the apostles, when he sent them forth during his abode upon earth, to go into the way of the Gentiles. From hence we are able to account for the slow opening of the universal character of Christianity ; and we learn to admire the skill and address with which our Lord employed general expressions, parables, and action, gradually to unfold this offensive truth. The name by which he commonly designed himself, "the Son of Man," was most expressive of his connexion with the whole human race. In his discourses with the Jews, he frequently called himself the light of the world, and many words dropped from him, which, howsoever they were understood by his hearers, appear to us intended to mark the full extent of his gracious undertaking.* "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold ; them also I must bring, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd." "I, if I be lifted up," referring to the manner of his death on the cross, "will draw all men to me."† Several of his parables convey under a thin disguise the future extension of his kingdom, the rejection of those who thought they had an exclusive title to its privileges, and the introduction of those whom the Jews held in contempt.‡ Our Lord began his public ministry at Jerusalem by driving the buyers and sellers out of the temple ; and he repeated this action a little before his crucifixion. The action appears to an ordinary reader to be merely a transport of zeal. But if you read the enlightened commentary of Bishop Hurd at the end of the first volume of his sermons, you will regard it in a much higher light, as a symbolical action, intimating in the most significant manner that the house of God was to become, under the Christian dispensation, a house of prayer for all nations. The only place in the temple allotted for the devout heathen, or proselytes of the gate, who chose to come up to Jerusalem, that they might there worship the God of Israel, was an outer court, in which many things necessary for the service of the temple were exposed to sale. Our Lord, by driving the buyers and sellers out of this court, vindicated the rights of the Gentiles, who had been insulted during their devotions by the uproar of a fair ; and although he did not proceed so far as to bring them into the sanctuary, yet by this mark of his attention he gave a pledge of the fulness of that grace which was soon to be revealed to them.

Accordingly the commission given to the apostles immediately before his ascension, was unlimited. "Go, make disciples of all nations. Ye shall be witnesses to me unto the uttermost part of the

* Mat. viii. 11.

† John x. 16 ; xii. 32.

‡ Mat. xx. xxi. xxii.

earth. And he said unto them, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”* The gift of tongues, conferred upon them ten days after his ascension, qualified them for executing this unlimited commission : and the miracles, which they were enabled to perform, constituted an evidence of their divine mission equally intelligible to men in all countries, and fitted to bring universal conviction. Paul, who was added to the number of the apostles after the ascension of Jesus, was told by a special revelation at the time of his conversion, that he was to be sent far from Jerusalem to the Gentiles;† and Acts x. relates the manner in which the minds of the other apostles, who still retained many of the prejudices of the Jews, were opened to conceive the true character of the gospel, and to understand the extent of their own commission. Peter was instructed in a vision not to call that unclean which God hath cleansed ; he then received a command to preach the gospel to Cornelius, a devout heathen ; and his preaching was accompanied with a descent of the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost upon Cornelius and his family. These three circumstances, the vision, the command, and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, appeared to the other apostles to constitute a full vindication of his conduct ; and although they had blamed Peter when they first heard of his going in to the Gentiles, they were satisfied, after he expounded to them the whole matter, that by the gospel there is “ granted to the Gentiles also repentance unto life.”

As soon as this enlarged idea took possession of their minds, it formed one great subject of their discourses and their writings ; and we see them labouring to bring it forth to the admiration of the world. While Paul avails himself of his Jewish learning to prove that the Gospel is the end of the law, his epistles abound with the declaration of that mystery, *i. e.* that part of the conduct of divine Providence formerly unknown, which had been revealed to him, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and partakers of the same promise in Christ by the Gospel. He magnifies the grace of God, who now appears not the God of the Jews, but the God of the Gentiles also, “ rich in mercy to all that call upon him ;” and he dwells upon this distinguishing excellence of the Gospel, that under it there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, but that Christ is all in all. The Evangelist John, who wrote his Gospel long after the rest, in relating a saying of Caiaphas the high priest, adds these words of himself, that Jesus Christ “ should die not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad ;”‡ and in the book of the Revelation, where he writes by the commandment of Jesus the things shown to him in vision which were to be hereafter, he mentions an angel whom he saw flying in heaven, having the Gospel to preach to them that dwell upon the earth ; and he says that he beheld a great multitude of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.§

I have thought it of importance thus to bring together, in one view,

* Mat. xxviii. 19. Acts i. 8. Luke xxiv. 46, 47.

† Acts xxii. 21.

‡ John xi. 40—52.

§ Rev. xiv. 6 ; vii. 9.

the Scripture account of Christianity as an universal religion,—as offering a remedy which, in this respect, corresponds to the disease, that it is not confined to any one nation, but may be embraced by men of every country. It is a branch of the evidence of Christianity, that there is nothing in its nature to prevent the universal publication of it, and that there is a tendency in the general course of things to bring about this event. And although the accomplishment of the prediction, that it is to be preached to all nations, has been delayed, there cannot fairly be drawn by reasoning or analogy any presumption that the prediction will never be accomplished. We are thus warranted to apply to the Christian religion that character which it assumes to itself as the religion of mankind; we discern one sense in which it may with propriety be said that “God will have all men to be saved, and that Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world;” and we perceive the significancy of that expression of Paul, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

SECTION II.

THE second preliminary point is, that the extent of the remedy brought in the Gospel is limited by the terms in which it is offered. As Jesus gave his apostles a commission to preach repentance and remission of sins in his name among all nations, they executed their commission in such words as these, “Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” “I testified,” says Paul, “both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

From these passages, which accord with the general strain of the New Testament, it seems to follow, that the Gospel, which is the religion of sinners, and professes to bring a remedy for the evils of sin, is a remedy only to those who repent and believe. Although different sects of Christians, therefore, may disagree as to the description of repentance and faith, as to the manner in which they are produced, and the connexion between them and the efficacy of what Christ did: it does not appear possible that any sect which receives the Scriptures can deny that a certain character or state of mind, which is there expressed by repentance and faith, is required in all who partake of the remedy, and consequently that the extent of the remedy is limited by this requisition.

This acknowledged point, that whosoever repents and believes shall be saved, is the great subject of preaching: and as it is the only point respecting the extent of the remedy, which is clearly and incontrovertibly revealed in Scripture, so it is of infinitely greater importance than all the controverted points. They are matters of speculation, upon which it is natural for the human mind to form some opinion.

* Acts iii. 19; xvi. 31; xx. 21.

The opinion may be more or less agreeable to the most rational conceptions of the divine attributes, to the views incidentally given in Scripture, and to the great end of Christianity. There is truth or error, there is consistency or inconsistency in the sentiments entertained upon this as upon all other subjects; and as the Church of Scotland has adopted a particular system of opinions concerning the extent of the remedy, it is decent and fit that those who desire to be her ministers should be well acquainted with the grounds of that system. But it is not necessary that these grounds, or that the system itself should be explained to the people. We fulfil the office which is committed to the ministers of the Gospel, when we call our hearers to repent and believe, in order that they may be saved; and all those teachers, who agree as to the character of the person by whom the remedy was brought, and as to the nature of the remedy, may discharge this duty with the same fidelity and the same energy, although they differ in their speculations as to many points that respect the extent of the remedy.

The Socinians, who differ from all other Christians as to the nature of the remedy, cannot be expected to agree with them as to the extent of it. Considering the pardon of those who repent as flowing from the essential goodness of God, without reference to any thing that Christ has done, they must conceive that pardon is dispensed at all times, and in all places, with equal liberality; and considering eternal life not as purchased by Jesus Christ, but as the free gift of God to creatures naturally mortal, they conceive that this gift will be bestowed upon all virtuous men that have lived from the beginning of the world under any dispensation of religion. They allow that Christianity was of great advantage to the world by bringing assurance of these truths: and that those who lived in the ancient world were in the same situation with the inhabitants of countries where the Gospel has never been published, without that comfort under a consciousness of infirmities, and those incitements to well-doing, which Christians may derive from the Gospel. But if, on this account merely, they fail in their duty, their situation will plead indulgence for their failings; and if they attain nearly the same degree of virtue as Christians without the same advantages, they are still better entitled to partake of that exuberant grace by which our Father in heaven rewards the services of his children.

There is a system with regard to the nature of the remedy, which considers the loss of immortality as the only forfeiture incurred by the sin of Adam, and the restoration of forfeited life as the blessing purchased by Christ. Those who hold this system are led by their principles to consider the purchase of the second Adam, as of the same extent with the forfeiture of the first: they allow, with the Socinians, that those who never heard of Christianity are destitute of many advantages for the improvement of their minds which that revelation affords: but they do not conceive that the extent of the remedy is, in any measure, dependent upon the extent of the publication. They bring down the effect of the death of Christ to a right which he has acquired of giving immortality to a race of beings by whom it had been forfeited, and they look upon an universal resurrection as the accomplishment of his undertaking.

If both these systems are essentially defective as to the nature of the remedy, there must also be a defect in their manner of stating the extent of it. Christians who consider the death of Christ as an atonement, upon account of which the sins of those that repent are forgiven, have many points to take into view before they can determine the manner in which this atonement reaches either those to whom it has been preached, or those to whom it has not. But although we are not prepared for stating that system with regard to the condition of persons who have not heard of the Gospel, which results from the Catholic opinion concerning the nature of the remedy, it may be proper to mention, under this second preliminary point, a splendid speculation concerning the final state of the wicked, which has arisen out of some of the principles formerly delineated.

If, according to the Socinian system, the essential goodness of God incline him at all times to pardon transgression, we cannot suppose that he will prolong the existence of creatures naturally mortal, only that he may continue, through all eternity, to punish the sins committed during a few years upon earth : and if, according to the middle system, it is the character of the Gospel to restore forfeited life to the whole human race, it seems to follow, that the restored life cannot, in any case, be merely the capacity of enduring everlasting punishment, since, upon that supposition, the restoration of life, which is stated as a universal blessing, would to many be the greatest curse. These two systems, therefore, tend to produce the belief that those who have been wicked shall, after a certain time, be either annihilated or reformed.

The annihilation of soul and body, according to the Socinian system, is the natural mortality of man left to operate upon those who reject the offer of eternal life made in the Gospel ; according to the middle system, it is the curse which Adam conveyed to his posterity, which the Gospel offers to remove from all, and which it effectually removes from those who have lived virtuously. As the sins of those who reject this offer deserve a punishment more severe than any that is inflicted in this life, they are raised at the last day that they may receive according to their deeds ; but after they have endured a sufficient measure of punishment, they are left to relapse into that death, that extinction of being, in which the whole human race would have remained, had it not been for the grace of the Gospel. If the souls and bodies of all that have been wicked are at length annihilated, the final effect of the sins committed in this life will be a loss of existence in the universe, but not a perpetuity of misery ; for, after a certain time, no beings of the human race shall exist, but those who, in consequence of the virtues which they had displayed upon earth, are made happy for ever.

Others conceive that the wicked shall not be annihilated, but, after a certain time, reformed. Considering the soul of man as naturally immortal, and thinking it unworthy of the ruler of the universe to adopt, as a method of conducting his government, the destruction of a number of beings whom he had made to live for ever, they endeavour to reconcile the future misery of the wicked with their system concerning the nature of the Gospel remedy, by supposing that the punishments which are endured after death, being intended, like

many of the calamities of this life, to correct the vices of those upon whom they are inflicted, shall terminate in their reformation. If it be admitted that goodness constitutes the whole moral character of the Deity, that, as with respect to his understanding he is light, so with respect to his will he is love, and nothing but love, it will follow, that what are commonly called his other attributes are only modifications of goodness, the necessary result of this primary attribute; that justice, which is generally stated as opposite to goodness, is nothing else but a constant desire of giving to his reasonable creatures what their moral state requires. Those who are docile and tractable, he leads by gentle methods to the perfection of their nature; those whose passions are impetuous, and whose hearts are hard, he subdues by afflictions, that they may become partakers of his holiness. The discipline of this life, which often appears harsh, is only the expression of his fatherly love administering salutary chastisement; and as this discipline does not produce its effect with regard to all during the short time that is allotted to them upon earth, he continues the chastisement in a future state, where it is administered with a severity suited to the depravity of the sufferer, and is prolonged till sin be completely destroyed. If all the wicked are at length thus reformed after death, the final effect of his transgressions that have been committed upon earth, is neither the destruction nor the everlasting misery of any human being: for the misery endured after death, which is described in Scripture by many lively images, gradually works the correction of that moral evil from which it sprung; and when it has accomplished this end, every sinner will be rescued from the consequences of his transgression, and all the children of Adam placed in a state of unalterable virtue and happiness.

A view of the termination of future punishment, which appears to be agreeable to the most enlarged conceptions of the divine goodness that reason can form, is supposed to derive much confirmation from those descriptions of the divine clemency with which the Scriptures abound; from its being said that the mercy of the Lord endureth for ever, that he will not forsake the works of his hands, that he will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth: and from our Lord's employing, Matt. xxv. 46, as the name of the everlasting punishment reserved for the wicked, the word *αἰώνιος*, which is the *vox signata* in Greek for that kind of punishment which is meant for the correction of him who has behaved ill, that he may behave better in time to come, and which may be called everlasting, if it endures without intermission till he be corrected.

This opinion, concerning the final reformation of the wicked by means of the punishments of a future state, is traced back to Origen, a father of the third century, to whose extensive erudition and indefatigable industry, the Christian world is much indebted, but whose fancy, which in many respects was not tutored and chastised by sound judgment, produced various mystical interpretations of Scripture, and whose intimate acquaintance with the heathen philosophy was often employed to adulterate the simplicity of the gospel. The Platonic and Stoic philosophers spoke of a certain period of ages, to which we are accustomed to give the name of *annus magnus*, after the completion of which they conceived that all things would

return to the state in which they were at the creation. It is not agreed amongst the learned, whether Origen adopted this idea so completely as to believe that there is a succession of worlds, a resolution of all things into their first principles, and a reproduction of them in continual rotation. But he certainly believed that the punishments of the wicked in a future state would, after some ages, produce an amendment of character, and that in consequence of this amendment, all the spirits who had endured these punishments would in time, some at a nearer, and some at a more remote period, join those spirits who had suffered nothing after death.

The authority of Origen gave a degree of currency to this opinion. It is said to have been held by some writers in the dark ages. It was revived about two hundred years ago by its conformity to the leading principles of Socinianism; and, not to mention many smaller treatises, it was lately exhibited in a most elegant and pleasing dress, in a French book entitled, "*Le plan de Dieu envers les hommes, par Petit Pierre.*" This opinion has not been confined to Socinians. Many who hold the doctrine of atonement have discovered a propensity to embrace an opinion, which seems to magnify the effect of the interposition of Christ; at least they are disposed to consider the eternity of hell torments as a problematical point which the Scriptures have not decided; and some benevolent writers have laboured to bring forth an idea, which they call in a Scripture phrase the restitution of all things. It appears to them that so glorious a being as the Son of God must have come into the world, and endured the sufferings which marked his life, for some design more excellent, and more worthy of the Father of all than the redemption of a part of mankind. They suppose, therefore, that his mediation is operating, although they cannot explain how, for the universal restoration of the human race; that he is the agent employed in extirpating moral evil from the creation of God; that this is the reason of the name given him in the Septuagint translation of a part of the celebrated prophecy of the Messiah, in Isaiah ix. *καὶ καλεῖται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, Μεγάλης βουλῆς ἀγγελὸς*: not as it is rendered in our English Bibles, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor," but "His name shall be called the messenger of the great design;" that his kingdom shall continue till the great design be accomplished; and that when he has made an end of sin, and reconciled all things in heaven and earth to his Father, he will deliver up the kingdom; and righteousness, peace, and happiness will for ever pervade the whole intelligent creation.

These are delightful prospects; and a heart, which is disposed by its own good affections to take an interest in the prosperity of other beings, is ready to entertain them upon very slender evidence. But it is of much importance for students in divinity to remember that these prospects do not constitute an essential part of theology. They extend far, very far indeed, beyond the limits of our observation or our capacities. They rest upon conjectures, not upon reasoning; upon incidental expressions of Scripture, which admit of other interpretations; upon analogies which even when they are most pointed and numerous, amount only to probability, which are easily overstrained by a mind elevated with the magnificence of the subject, or warmed with philanthropy, and which, without much caution, lead

to fanciful theories, and to conclusions that are found to be false. Whenever we presume to determine what is proper to be done in the government of the universe, we attempt to comprehend a subject, which embraces numberless relations that are perfectly unknown to us. Such speculations may be pleasing, and they may be plausible ; but they are the speculations of creatures who forget that they “are but of yesterday and know nothing,” and who, stepping beyond the humble and sober province that is allotted to man, presume to instruct the Ancient of days. It is the character of sound theology, not to subject the administration of God to our conjectures and theories ; but, in the firm persuasion that he is able to do all his pleasure, and that he will do that which is right, to inquire with reverence and with diligence what he has done, and what he has said he will do, and to make the information which Scripture affords upon these points, the measure of our hopes, and the rule of our conduct.

Although, therefore, I judge it proper, in opening that great division of the subjects of theological controversy upon which we now enter, to mention speculations that have been indulged concerning the final condition of those who reject the salvation of the gospel, it is not to be supposed that these speculations constitute the points which divide the opinions of the Christian world in regard to the extent of the remedy. They are the speculations of individual writers, or they arise incidentally from general systems. But they are not the characteristic tenets of any great body of Christians ; and whatever similarity there may appear in the name, the questions concerning universal and particular redemption have a very different object.

With these questions I begin the statement of that system of doctrine in regard to the extent of the remedy, which is called Calvinistic, by holding which, the Church of Scotland is distinguished from the Arminians, from the Lutheran churches, and from a very great part of the members of the Church of England.

Leland's View of the Deistical Writers.

Shaw's Philosophy of Judaism.

Clarke's Evidences and Sermons.

Law's Theory of Religion.

Jortin's Discourses.

Warburton's Divine Legation of Moses.

Hurd's Sermons.

BOOK IV.

(Continued.)

OPINIONS CONCERNING THE NATURE, THE EXTENT, AND THE APPLICATION OF THE REMEDY BROUGHT BY THE GOSPEL.

CHAPTER VI.

PARTICULAR REDEMPTION.

By the Calvinistic tenets is meant that system of doctrine with regard to the extent of the remedy, which distinguishes those who embrace all the opinions of Calvin, from those Christians who agree with him only as to the divinity of Christ and the atonement. I shall not attempt to open the whole system at once; but I shall go step by step through the points of difference between it and other systems, in the order which appears to me the most natural. In this way we shall not reach all the parts of the Calvinistic system, till we have gone through the third great division of the subjects of theological controversy, I mean the application of the remedy; and we shall then be able, by a short retrospective view of the ground over which we have travelled, to form a precise connected idea of the whole. According to this manner of exhibiting the Calvinistic system, I begin with stating the question concerning universal and particular redemption: in other words, whether Christ died for all men, or only for those who shall finally be saved by him.

The two sides of this question do not imply any difference of opinion with regard to the sufficiency of the death of Christ, or with regard to the number and character of those who shall eventually be saved. They who hold the one and the other side of the question agree, that although the sufferings of Christ have a value sufficient to atone for the sins of all the children of Adam, from the beginning to the end of time, yet those only shall be saved by this atonement who repent and believe in him. But they differ as to the destination of the death of Christ; whether in the purpose of the Father and the

will of the Son it respected all mankind, or only those persons to whom the benefit of it is at length to be applied.

The doctrine of universal redemption is mentioned as one of the distinguishing tenets of the Pelagians. It forms the subject of one of the five points which comprehend the Arminian system. It is held by all the Lutheran churches. It seems to be taught in one of the articles of the church of England, and several parts of the Liturgy; and it is avowed by the great body of English divines as the doctrine of Scripture and of their church. This doctrine will be understood from the second of the five Arminian points, which is thus expressed: "Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, died for all men, and for every individual, so as to obtain for all, by his death, reconciliation and remission of sins; upon this condition, however, that none in reality enjoys the benefit of this remission but the man who believes." Dr. Whitby, in his discourse on the five points, thus explains the doctrine: "When we say Christ died for all, we do not mean that he hath purchased actual pardon or reconciliation or life for all; this being in effect to say that he procured an actual remission of sins to unbelievers, and actually reconciled God to the impenitent and disobedient, which is impossible. He only, by his death, hath put all men in a capacity of being justified and pardoned, and so of being reconciled to, and having peace with God, upon their turning to God, and having faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; the death of Christ having rendered it consistent with the justice and wisdom of God, with the honour of his Majesty, and with the ends of government, to pardon the penitent believer."

According to this doctrine, the death of Christ is an universal remedy for that condition in which the posterity of Adam are involved by sin—a remedy equally intended for the benefit of all. It removes the obstacles which the justice of God opposed to their deliverance. It puts all into a condition in which they may be saved, and it leaves their actual salvation to depend upon their faith. The remedy may in this way be much more extensive than the application of it. But even although the offer of pardon were rejected by all, it would not follow that the atonement made by the death of Christ was unnecessary, for the offer could not have been given without it; and whatever reception the gospel may meet with, the love of God is equally conspicuous in having provided a method by which he may enter into a new covenant with all who had sinned.

This doctrine appears to represent the Father of all in a light most suitable to that character, as regarding his children with an equal eye, providing, without respect of persons, a remedy for their disease, and extending his compassion as far as their misery reaches. And it appears to represent the satisfaction which Christ offered to Divine justice, as opening a way for the love of God to the whole human race being made manifest by the most enlarged exercise of mercy. These views are supported by the general strain of Scripture, and by many very significant expressions which occur in the New Testament.* It is said that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world; that he died for all; that he gave himself a ransom for all; that he tasted

* John i. 29; iii. 16. 1 Tim. ii. 4; iv. 10. 2 Pet. iii. 9.

death for every man.* The extent of the grace of God in our justification seems to be compared with the extent of the effects of Adam's sin in our condemnation.† Large societies of persons professing Christianity, all of whom we cannot suppose to be of the number of those who shall be finally saved, are addressed in the Epistles as those for whom Christ gave himself; and there are expressions in some of the Epistles which seem to intimate that he died even for those who perish.‡ False teachers, who brought in damnable heresies, are said. 2 Pet. ii. 1, to have been bought by the Lord. All to whom the gospel is revealed are commanded to believe in Christ for the remission of sins, which seems to imply that he has made atonement for their sins; and to give thanks for Christ, which seems to imply that he is an universal Saviour. Jesus marvelled at the unbelief of those among whom he lived; he upbraided them because they repented not; he besought men to come to him; and he bewailed the folly of the Jews, saying, as he wept over their city, "if thou hadst known in this thy day the things which belong to thy peace."§ Even the Almighty, both in the Old and in the New Testament, condescends to use entreaties and expostulations, as well as commands. "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? O that my people had hearkened unto me!"|| "God hath given unto us," says the Apostle, "the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."¶ The establishment of a gospel ministry continues this ambassadorship in every Christian country, and may be regarded as a standing witness of the universality of redemption, because these expostulations, which the servants of Christ are commissioned to use in the name of God, appear to be without meaning, unless we suppose that God hath done every thing on his part, and that it rests only with us to embrace the remedy which is offered.

In giving this general view of the arguments by which the advocates for the doctrine of universal redemption support their opinion, I have separated them as much as possible from those more intricate questions of theology which will meet us as we advance. But even from the simple manner in which I have stated them, it is plain that they admit of much amplification. Some of them are susceptible of rhetorical embellishment; others lead into a large field of Scripture criticism; and there are others, the force of which cannot be estimated till after a review of the whole Calvinistic system. These arguments are spread out at length, not only by professed Arminian writers, but by many English divines, particularly in Barrow's Sermons upon the doctrine of universal redemption, and in the second of Whitby's discourses upon the five points, entitled the Extent of Christ's Redemption. These two writers have given a collection of all the texts of Scripture which appear to establish this doctrine, and a very favour-

* John vi. 51. 1 Tim. ii. 6. Heb. ii. 9. 1 John ii. 2.

† Rom. v. 18.

‡ 1 Cor. viii. 11. Rom. xiv. 15.

§ Mark vi. 6. Matth. xi. 20, 28. Luke xix. 41, 42.

|| Isa. v. 4. Psal. lxxxi. 13.

¶ 2 Cor. v. 18, 19, 20.

able specimen of the mode of reasoning by which it is commonly supported.

Any person who examines with candour the arguments now stated, will acknowledge that they have considerable weight. I mention this, because I do not know any lesson more becoming students of divinity, than this—not to despise the reasonings of those with whose opinions they do not entirely agree. The longer they study theological controversy with that sobriety and fairness of mind which is essential to the character of every inquirer after truth, they will perceive the more clearly how little acquainted with the weakness of the human understanding, and with the intricacy of many of the points that have divided the Christian world, are those who state their opinions in the petulant dogmatical manner often assumed by smatterers in knowledge, as if there were not a shadow of reason but upon their own side. In the question which we are now treating, it requires a thorough acquaintance with the Calvinistic system, and much compass of thought, to apprehend the full force of the answers that may be given to the arguments for universal redemption; and I warn you rather to wait for the conviction which will arise from a view of all the parts of that system, than to expect that arguments equally plausible, in favour of particular redemption, are immediately to be stated. The following observations, however, will, upon reflection, open the sources of these arguments.

1. Those who hold that the destination and intention of the death of Christ respected only such as shall finally be saved by him, appear to be warranted by many expressions which occur in the New Testament; such as the following: John x. 11, 15, “I lay down my life for the sheep;” that is, as the expression is explained in the context, for those who “hear and follow me;” John xi. 52; xv. 12, 13, 14: Eph. v. 25.

2. As the persons, to whom the intention of Christ’s death appears in such expressions to be restrained, are found in all places of the world, there is a propriety and significancy in the general phrases employed elsewhere to denote them: and when some of the texts commonly urged in proof of universal redemption are examined particularly, there will be discovered, in the context, circumstances which indicate that the general expressions there used were intended to mark the indiscriminate extension of the blessings of the Gospel to men of all nations. Thus, because the benefit of the Jewish sacrifices was confined to that nation, John the Baptist, when he saw Jesus coming to him, marked him out to the people as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world;”^{*} that is, of all those in every place who are forgiven.—So John, in his first epistle, speaking as a Jew, says of Jesus, “he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only,” that is, not for the sins of us Jews only, “but also for the sins of the whole world.”[†]—So the apostle Paul says of Jesus, he “gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”[‡] But if we attend to the scope of the discourse, of which these words make a part, which is an exhortation to pray for all men, and a command to all men in every place to pray, it will be perceived that the apos-

^{*} John i. 29.

[†] 1 John ii. 2.

[‡] 1 Tim. ii. 6.

tle's argument does not necessarily require any farther meaning to be affixed to these words than this,—that Christ gave himself a ransom not merely for that peculiar people, who are sometimes called in the Old Testament the “ransomed of the Lord,” but for all in every place who shall obtain redemption.

3. Although deliverance from the evils of sin, the great blessing purchased by the death of Christ, is peculiar to those who shall finally be saved by him, yet there are blessings which the publication of the Gospel has imparted to others; and there is strict propriety in saying that the love of God to mankind which appears in creation and providence, and by which God is good to all, has produced the manifestation and the death of Christ, although the benefits intended by that event for those who shall finally be saved are very much superior to the benefits which it may be the instrument of conveying to the whole human race. To a great part of the world the Gospel has communicated the most valuable knowledge: it has delivered many nations from gross superstition and idolatry; it has explained the duties of men more clearly than any other method of instruction: it furnishes restraints upon vice and incentives to virtuous exertion, that are unknown to civil legislation; and by all these methods it contributes to the prosperity of society, and to the welfare of the individual. These common benefits of Christianity are sufficient to explain many expressions in the epistles addressed to Christian societies, without our being obliged to suppose that all the members of these societies were in the end to inherit eternal life. In respect of these common benefits, we understand the following passages, Heb. vi. 4, Heb. x. 29, and 2 Peter ii. 1. For all who had an opportunity of hearing the Gospel, had tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; they were sanctified through the blood of the covenant; and, in the language of Peter in his first epistle, they were “redeemed with the blood of Christ, from their vain conversation which they had received by tradition from their fathers.” Amongst the number thus redeemed, were the false teachers of whom he speaks in his second epistle. They had relinquished the errors in which they were educated: they had professed themselves the servants of Jesus, and were bound to him as their Lord; but by bringing in damnable heresies, they denied the Lord that bought them. The apostle Paul seems to refer to this distinction between the common benefits which all professing Christians derive from the death of Christ, and the complete salvation of those who are called his sheep and his friends, when he says, 1 Tim. iv. 10, “God is the Saviour of all men;” not only in respect of his persevering providence, but in respect of that *χαρις σωτηριος* which, through the kindness and love of God our Saviour, hath appeared to all men;—“specially of them that believed,” that is, he is in a much more eminent sense the Saviour of them that believe, than of other men.

1. It should be considered, that although the advocates for universal redemption do not allow that there is any weight in the two preceding observations, yet they are obliged, upon their own principles, to admit that many of those expressions, from which they infer that Christ died intentionally for all men, require a limitation. For if faith in Christ be the condition upon which men become partakers

of the propitiation which he offered to God, it seems to follow that all who have not the means of attaining this faith are excluded from the benefit of the propitiation. But it is certain that the ancient heathen world did not know the nature of that dispensation, the promise of which was confined to the Jews; and it is manifest that a great part of the world at this day have never heard of the Gospel. Were the offer of pardon that is contained in the Gospel actually made to all the children of Adam, there would be an appearance of truth in saying that all men were thereby put into a condition in which they might be saved, and that it depended upon themselves whether or not they embraced the offer. But if the efficacy of the remedy is inseparably connected with its being accepted, it cannot be, in the intention of the Almighty, an universal remedy, since he has withheld the means of accepting it from many of those for whom it was said to have been provided. The words of the apostle, then, "God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth," must receive from the event an interpretation different from that which is the most obvious; and all the other texts urged in favour of universal redemption are in like manner limited by the imperfect publication of the Gospel. The Arminians themselves acknowledge that there is a secret which they cannot penetrate,—a deep and unsearchable counsel, in leaving so many nations without the possibility of attaining to the truth; and all their attempts to reconcile an intention in God to save the inhabitants of these nations, with the grossness of the superstition in which they are involved, and the insuperable obstacles which education, example, habit, and situation oppose to their believing in Christ, are unsatisfying and defective; because they either proceed upon the principles of the Socinian doctrine, that men may every where be saved by acting up to the light of nature, or they approach to some parts of the Calvinistic system, respecting the effectual and irresistible operation of the grace of God upon the soul; which the Arminians profess to renounce.

5. To those who hold the doctrine of particular redemption it appears that the event, in those countries where the gospel has been published, clearly indicates that there was not, in the Almighty, an intention of saving all men by the death of Christ. For it is plain that many of those who have every opportunity of believing in Christ either reject his religion, or show by their conduct that they do not possess that faith which entitles them to partake in the benefits of his death. With regard to them, therefore, his death is in vain; and if God intended that they should be saved, his intention fails of its effect. But it seems when we hold such a language, that we speak in a manner unbecoming our circumstances, and inconsistent with those views of the Almighty which are suggested by reason, and are clearly taught in Scripture. "Known to God are all his works from the beginning." The whole scheme of the universe, which derived its existence from his pleasure, was present to the Creator at the instant when he said, "Let there be light." The actions of his creatures, which form a most important part of that scheme, were to him the object of a foreknowledge infinitely more clear and certain than our knowledge of that which is before our eyes. The perfections of his nature exclude the possibility of any change in the divine mind; and

those events which to us appear the most unexpected and irregular, fulfil "the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of his will."

If these views of the Almighty are just, and if our minds are able to follow out the consequences which necessarily result from them, we cannot conceive him susceptible of that disappointment, regret, and alteration of measures which we often experience by the failure of our schemes; but we must admit that the original intention of the Creator and Ruler of the universe always coincides with the event which takes place under his administration. Since many, therefore, to whom the gospel is published, appear, as far as we can judge from our own observation, and from the complaints of Scripture, to remain under the wrath of God, we do not seem to draw an unwarrantable conclusion, when we infer from the event, that it was not a part of the intention of the Almighty to deliver them from wrath by the death of his Son. In the same manner as many who have the means of improvement do not attain knowledge or skill, and some who have talents and opportunities for rising to wealth and honour pass their days in obscurity and indigence; so many to whom the offer of eternal life is made through Jesus Christ put it far from them. In both cases the blessings of God are abused, and men do not reap the temporal and spiritual benefits, which, had it not been for their own fault, they might have reaped; but in neither case is the intention of God disappointed. For he foresaw the use which they would make of his blessings, and all the consequences of their conduct entered into the plan of his government.

These views of the Almighty seem to correct that desire of magnifying the love of God to mankind, which has led many to ascribe to him an intention of saving all men, although he knew that a great part of the human race were not to be saved. They seem to suggest, in place of this defective intention, a destination more worthy of the sovereignty of the Creator,—a destination of saving those who shall in the end be saved; and there are many places of Scripture in which the destination, that we are led in this manner to deduce from the perfection of the divine nature, seems to be intimated. I refer at present only to John vi. where our Lord says repeatedly, that he gave his life for the world, and where he speaks also of those whom the Father hath given him. "The bread of God is he who cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. All that the Father giveth me shall come to me. This is the Father's will, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." Here are the doctrines of particular and of universal redemption seemingly taught in the same discourse. The expressions of the one kind must be employed to qualify the expressions of the other kind; and it cannot be said that we pervert Scripture, when, adhering to the particular destination of saving those who shall be saved, which reason teaches and Jesus Christ declares, we give the other expressions such an interpretation as renders them consistent with that destination.

This fifth observation has conducted us to the threshold of those intricate questions in theology, which arise out of the different con-

ceptions formed by Christians of the nature and the manner of the divine foreknowledge. To the views entertained of this attribute, we may trace the different opinions concerning the doctrine of predestination; and therefore from this point I shall begin, under a deep sense of the difficulty of the subject, and of the reverence and humility with which it becomes us to speak of the counsels of the Almighty, to state these opinions.

Barrow's Sermons.

Whitby on the Arminian Points

CHAPTER VII

OPINIONS CONCERNING PREDESTINATION.

SECTION I.

THE opinion which is to be stated first, because it appears to be the most simple, may be called the Socinian. It is the system of those who attempt to get rid of all the difficulties in which the divine foreknowledge seems to involve the subject, by denying that this attribute belongs to the Almighty to the extent in which it is usually understood. Socinus and his immediate followers admitted that God knows all things which are knowable. But they abridged the objects of divine knowledge, by withdrawing from that number those events whose future existence they considered as uncertain. Their manner of reasoning was this. Every thing that now is, has a real existence, which is the subject of knowledge. Every thing that is past had at some former time a real existence, which is also the subject of knowledge. Every thing that is necessarily to happen at some future time may be known by a mind capable of tracing the nature of the connexion, by which it proceeds out of that which now is. Thus all the changes in the material world arise, according to certain general laws, out of its present condition. If any being, therefore, is perfectly acquainted with that condition, and with the operation of those laws, he sees the future in the present; and, in general, every event, the futuration of which is certain, may be the subject of infallible knowledge. But there are events which appeared to Socinus contingent, in this sense of the word, that they do not arise from any thing preceding, as their cause. They may be, or they may not be; and as he thought that they were not certainly future, he thought also that it was impossible for any being to know certainly beforehand that they were to happen. Amongst this number he ranked the determinations of free agents, all those actions which proceed from the will of man. For as the actions of men follow the choice which they have made, and as he who chose one thing might have chosen another, it appears that there is no previous circumstance necessarily and unavoidably producing this or that action; and from hence Socinus inferred that every thing done by men acting freely is, by its nature, incapable of

being the subject of that infallible foreknowledge commonly ascribed to the Almighty.

According to this system, there cannot be any such degree with regard to the salvation of particular persons as is meant by the word predestination. For as the remission of sins is connected in Scripture with faith and repentance, and as the determinations of free agents are supposed to be unknown to God, he must be ignorant whether any persons will attain that character, without which they cannot be saved. The only decree respecting the salvation of men, which Socinus admits to have been made from the beginning, and to be unchangeable, is this general conditional decree, that whosoever repents and believes in Jesus shall have eternal life. This decree is applied to particular persons, when they appear to possess the character which it describes; and by this application, what in its original form was merely the declaration of a condition, becomes an absolute peremptory decree, giving eternal life to those who have been faithful unto death. But it is unknown to God what number of such persons there may be, or whether there may be any. Although he has provided means for the recovery of mankind, he is as ignorant of the efficacy or the result of these means as any of the children of men; and all the expressions in Scripture, which we are accustomed to consider as spoken after the manner of men, are understood by Socinus to be the literal descriptions of the state of a being, who waits with anxiety for what men will do, who is grieved at their obstinacy, who repents that he has done so much for them, and who is liable to meet with total disappointment in the end which he proposed to himself.

If this system appears to remove some of the difficulties which attend other systems, it purchases this advantage by bringing the character of the Deity so far down to a level with human weakness, as to sap the foundations of religion. If God does not foresee the determinations of free agents, he cannot foresee the consequences of their determinations. But if it be considered how very much the state of the moral world depends upon actions that proceed from choice, how far the history of the human race has, from the beginning, been affected by the conduct of creatures who might have acted otherwise, we must be sensible that a being who had not the foreknowledge of that conduct was, from the beginning, ignorant of by much the greatest part of the transactions that were to take place in the world which he made. The whole train of prosperous and calamitous events that were to befall families and nations was hidden from his eyes. Instead of appearing in the exalted light of the author of a plan by which the affairs of the universe are ordained and arranged for the good of his creatures, he becomes a spectator of unlooked-for occurrences, and his power and wisdom are employed merely in directing events as they arise to his view. His measures are perpetually traversed by evils which he had not foreseen; and while he is occupied from day to day in applying remedies to the disorders which he discovers in different parts of his works, new emergencies show that some other remedy might have been better suited to the case.

From the following expressions of Socinus, it will appear that I

have not exaggerated, in painting that degradation of the Deity which necessarily results from abridging his foreknowledge.—“No absurdity,” says Socinus, “will follow from supposing that God does not know all things before they happen. For of what use is this knowledge? Is it not enough that God perpetually governs all things, and that nothing can be done against his will; that he is always so present by his wisdom and power, that he can both discern the attempts of men, and hinder them if he pleases; that he can turn all that man can do to his own glory; and that he may, when he sees proper, appoint beforehand in what manner he shall accommodate his actions to the attempts which man may make?”* The answer to all such questions is this, that it is irreverent, and contrary to the idea of an infinitely perfect Being, to ask; is it not enough for him, that even we are able to form the notion of a much higher degree of perfection than is stated in the questions; that the characters of Creator and Ruler of the universe imply much more; and that the Scriptures uniformly ascribe to God the foreknowledge of the determinations of free agents? The moral conduct of many individuals was foretold before they were born; the behaviour of the people of Israel for a succession of ages, the treatment which they were to receive from the Egyptians, the Babylonians, and other nations; the peculiar kinds of wickedness which were to prevail in the neighbouring kingdoms; the obstinacy of the Jews in rejecting the Messiah; the circumstances of his sufferings; the destruction of Jerusalem, and the corruptions of Christianity,—all these are the subjects of predictions so particular, as to show the most intimate knowledge of the future sentiments and actions of men; for the events which I have enumerated, and many others which occur in reading the prophetic parts of Scripture, are of such a kind that they derive their complexion and character, not from any circumstances in the material world, but from the volitions and determinations of the free agents, who were concerned in bringing them about.

It cannot be said that the predictions of Scripture declare only what is probable. For, besides the apparent improbability of many of the events foretold, and the immense extent of time, and space, and operation, to which the predictions reach, it is obvious that all of them are delivered, not in the language of conjecture, but with the most solemn asseveration, in the name of the God of truth; and it is hard to form any conception more unworthy of the Supreme Being, than that he should conduct his government by declaring as certain, future events, concerning which he himself, at the time of the declaration, was doubtful.

Socinus, and some later writers who tread in his steps, sensible that the probability of the events foretold does not afford a satisfying account of the predictions that are found in Scripture, have recourse to a system, with regard to the exertion of the divine foreknowledge in particular cases, of which I shall endeavour to give a fair exposition. They hold that God is able to foresee future events whensoever he pleases, because he can make a particular ordination with respect to them; by which means, events in their own nature contingent be-

* Socini Prælect. cap. 8.

come certainly future, and so are the subject of infallible foreknowledge. Thus many blessings foretold in Scripture are good things which God had resolved to send by the actions of men: many evils foretold are punishments which he had resolved to inflict by the same means; many sins foretold are the consequence of his punishing former sin, by withdrawing that grace which would have restrained from future transgression; and the whole series of predictions, that respect the Messiah, results from the ordination of the Almighty concerning the deliverance of mankind. But we must not infer, it is said, from those extraordinary cases in which God chooses to foreordain, and consequently to foresee what is future, that his foreknowledge of future events is universal. The greater part of the determinations of free agents he leaves in their natural state of uncertainty: they may choose one course, or they may choose another; and the course which they are to follow is unknown to him till they have made their choice.

It is admitted by the framers of this new system, that the ordination of God gives events that certainty which renders them capable of being foreknown; and this principle is borrowed from that system of theology which it was their object to overturn. What is peculiar to them is, that they confine this ordination to particular extraordinary cases, and suppose all others exempted from it. But a foreknowledge, exerted at some times and not at others, constitutes a most imperfect kind of government. For the occasion of its being exerted at any particular season can be nothing else but the state of the world at that season: but as this state arises out of that which went before, and as the propriety of the measures taken in reference to it is very much affected by that which is to come after, a being, who is supposed ignorant of the great series of events in the universe, is unqualified for making any extraordinary interposition. The framers of the new system were obliged to account for the multitude of predictions respecting the Messiah, by ascribing the whole scheme of his appearance to the ordination of the Almighty. But that scheme, according to the account given of it in Scripture, embraces the introduction, the propagation, and the removal of sin, *i. e.* the whole history of the determinations of the human race, or of their moral conduct from the beginning to the end of time. The ordination of this scheme, therefore, necessarily includes the foreknowledge of the moral conduct of men; and we cannot withdraw that moral conduct from the number of the objects foreknown by God, without supposing that he was unacquainted with the reasons of that scheme which we allow that he ordained.

It appears, then, that the partial admission of the divine foreknowledge, to which necessity has driven the Socinians, does not answer the purpose for which it was resorted to; and that this system carries with it its own confutation, in presuming to restrict the operations of the Supreme Mind. Reason and Scripture concur in teaching that no bounds can be set to the Almighty. Our faculties may be unable to rise to the exalted conception of a Supreme Mind, to whom all things that have been, that now are, and that shall be, are equally present. But the plain declarations of Scripture supersede our speculations. There we read that all his works are known to him from

the beginning;* that all things are naked and open in his sight;† that the purposes of his heart endure throughout all generations.‡ The power of foretelling future events, which reason teaches to be essential to his nature, is there claimed by him as his prerogative;§ it is often occasionally exerted in uttering predictions: and as well from the nature of these predictions, as from the manner in which the power is elsewhere spoken of, we are led to conclude that it implies a perception of all the actions of his creatures, which is not subject to mistake, which is incapable of receiving any accession, and which extends with equal clearness and facility through every portion of space, and every point of duration.

That abridgment of the objects of the divine foreknowledge, which was first introduced by Socinus, and is peculiar to those who follow him, has not been adopted by all who are called Socinians. Dr. Priestley writes thus, in the first part of his *Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion*, which treats of the being and attributes of God. “God having made all things, and exerting his influence over all things, must know all things, and consequently be omniscient. Also, since he not only ordained, but constantly supports all the laws of nature, he must be able to foresee what will be the result of them, at any distance of time; just as a man who makes a clock can tell when it will strike. All future events, therefore, must be as perfectly known to the Divine Mind as those that are present; and as we cannot conceive that he should be liable to forgetfulness, we may conclude that all things, past, present, and to come, are equally known to him; so that his knowledge is infinite.” Dr. Priestley takes no notice of the distinction which Socinus made between those events which, arising from necessary causes, are certainly to be, and those which Socinus called contingent, such as the determinations of free agents. The reason is, that Dr. Priestley, being a professed materialist, considered the operations of mind as taking place according to the same laws of nature with the motions of body.

There does not appear to him any more uncertainty in the one than in the other, and therefore both are, in his opinion, equally the objects of divine foreknowledge. If the doctrine of the universal prescience of God unavoidably involves the principles of materialism, it must be renounced by all who hold that the soul is essentially distinct from the body. But if the doctrine can be defended without having recourse to these principles, it is not a sound argument against the truth of the doctrine, whatever discredit it may thereby suffer in the opinion of the ignorant or careless, that a materialist finds it perfectly reconcileable with his system.

SECTION II.

ARMINIUS, who lived in the beginning of the seventeenth century, may be regarded as the founder of the system of opinions generally held by those, who, while they admit the dignity of our Saviour's per-

* Acts xv. 18.

† Heb. iv. 13.

‡ Ps. xxxiii. 11.

§ Isa. xlv. 9, 10.

son, and the doctrine of atonement, do not hold the other doctrines of Calvinism. He and his followers renounced the peculiar tenets of Socinus with regard to the divine prescience. They considered the most contingent future events as known to God: but the power, by which such events are foreknown, appears to them essentially different from the foresight of those events, which arise by a continued chain of causes. It is a power of which they do not pretend to form any distinct conception, which they are content to resolve into the supereminent excellence of the divine nature, and the existence of which they do not attempt to establish by reasoning, but simply deduce from experience. The Scriptures, we have seen, abound with predictions of a series of contingent events, involving numberless determinations of free agents. But if contingent events were certainly foretold, it is manifest that they were certainly foreknown by that Being from whom the prediction proceeded; and if the fact be once established, that God foreknows contingent events, it is admitted by the Arminians, that all the difficulty, which we feel in accounting for the manner of the fact, does not constitute any argument against the truth of the fact. Socinus proceeded upon a maxim which has been repeated after Aristotle in many a system of logic.—*De futuris contingentibus non datur determinata veritas.* Entertaining no doubt of the truth of this maxim, he apprehended that the certain foreknowledge of events destroyed their contingency, and therefore he concluded it to be impossible, or a contradiction in terms, for contingent events to be certainly foreknown. But Arminius and his followers learnt to correct the maxim of Aristotle; and it is now universally understood amongst philosophers, that future events, which are in their own nature contingent, may be certain, and consequently may be foreknown. This will be understood from a familiar example. Whether I am to write a letter to-morrow or not is a matter purely contingent. If no foreign cause interpose to take from me the power which I now possess, I may write, or I may refrain from writing. Both events are equally possible; but one of the events will certainly happen; and of the two propositions, I will write to-morrow, I will not write to-morrow, one, although I do not know which, is at this moment true. The truth which now exists, whether it be perceived by any being or not, will be known at the end of to-morrow to me, and to any person who attends to my employments through the day: and if there is any being who possesses the faculty of knowing the truth beforehand, the determination of my mind is not in the least affected by his knowledge. Although it is certain when the day begins what I am to do, and although the event which is then certain may be known to some being whose understanding is more enlarged than mine, I feel no restraint through the course of the day; but I write or I do not write, I read or I do not read, I go abroad or I remain at home, according to circumstances.

We say, then, that contingency is inconsistent with that necessary determination to one event which excludes the possibility of another; but we say that it is not inconsistent with the certainty, that of two events, either of which might happen, one is to happen; and therefore we hold there is no contradiction in saying that a contingent event may be certainly foreknown. For as Dr. Clarke writes, “Fore-

knowledge has no influence at all upon the things foreknown ; and it has therefore no influence upon them, because things would be just as they were, and no otherwise, though there were no foreknowledge. It does not cause things to be.—The futurity of free actions is exactly the same, and in the nature of the things themselves, of the like certainty in event, whether they can, or whether they could not, be foreknown.”*

It is this possibility of foreseeing future contingencies, such as are the determinations of free agents, which distinguishes the Arminian system of predestination from the Socinian. Both systems proceed upon the general declaratory decree, that “whosoever believeth in Jesus Christ shall be saved,” as the first in order, and as becoming peremptory with regard to every individual after he has persevered in faith. But whereas the Socinian scheme supposes the number and the names of the individuals that shall be saved, to have been from the beginning unknown to God, and consequently the decrees respecting them to be made at such times as their faith appears to him, the Arminians do not conceive so unworthily of God as to think that any thing new and unexpected can present itself to his mind, and that his decrees are successively made according to emergencies ; but they consider all the grounds upon which the conditional decree is at length to become peremptory with regard to individuals, as from the beginning known to God. The amount of their tenets may be thus shortly stated : God, who wills all men to be saved, and who gave his Son to be the Saviour of the world, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, foresaw, before the foundation of the world, the use which men would make of the means of salvation provided for them in Christ. Upon the foresight of the faith and good works of some, he determined, from all eternity, to give them, upon account of Christ, and through Christ, eternal life ; and upon the foresight of the unbelief and impenitence of others, he determined, from all eternity, to leave them in sin and subject to condemnation.

According to this system, predestination, or the decree that some persons shall be saved, and others condemned, rests upon the pre-science of God, by which, says Arminius, in the declaration of his opinion, God knew, from eternity, what persons, under the administration of the means necessary for producing faith and repentance, were to believe, and what persons were not to believe. By all who hold this system, such a decree is represented as exhibiting at once the goodness and the justice of God : his goodness in providing a Saviour, and offering the means of salvation ; his justice, in rewarding men according to their works, giving eternal life to those who make a proper use of the means, and condemning only those who abuse them. There is, in the language of the Arminians, an antecedent will in God to save all men ; that is, a will previous to the consideration of the circumstances of individuals, that all men may be saved ; a will which does not rest in bare desire, what the schoolmen call *velleitas*, but appears carried forth into action in the means which he has provided to accomplish the end. There is in God a consequent will to save only some persons, and to condemn others ; that is,

* Sermon on Omniscience of God.

a will consequent upon the consideration of the conduct of individuals, and corresponding to that conduct. The difference, say the Arminians, between the antecedent and the consequent will of God, is owing entirely to the sins of men; every thing has been done by him that is necessary for their salvation; and if they did their part, the antecedent and the consequent will of God would coincide, and all men would be saved.

And thus, by admitting that the actions of moral agents may be free, although they are foreknown, and by building upon the divine foreknowledge of these free actions, the decree respecting the final condition of mankind, the honour of the divine perfections appears to be maintained; the limitation of the extent of the remedy in the Gospel is seen to arise from no other cause but the fault of those to whom it is offered, and the strongest motives are held forth to engage us to "give all diligence in making our election sure." But plausible and unexceptionable as this system at first sight appears, there are difficulties under which it labours, and imperfections that adhere to it, which will open upon us by degrees as we proceed in the exposition of the Calvinistic system of predestination.

SECTION III.

THE characteristical feature of the Calvinistic system is, that entire dependence of the creature upon the Creator, which it uniformly asserts, by considering the will of the Supreme Being as the cause of every thing that now exists, or that is to exist at any future time. This principle is fruitful of consequences which, when they are followed out and applied, give to the doctrines of Christianity that peculiar complexion known by the name of Calvinism; and from this principle results that view of the divine prescience which is the ground-work of the doctrine of predestination that I am now to delineate.

Of things impossible there can be no knowledge. The same character, by which they must remain for ever in the class of nonentities, so that not even omnipotence can bring them into existence, withdraws them from the number of those objects of which any mind can form a distinct conception. But all things that are possible may be conceived; and the more perfect any understanding is, the more complete is the representation of things possible in that understanding. To the Supreme Mind, therefore, there are distinctly represented, not only all the single objects which may be brought into existence, but also all the possible combinations of single objects, their relations, and their mutual influences on the systems of which they may compose a part. Out of this representation of possibilities which is implied in the perfection of the divine understanding, the Supreme Being selects those single objects, and those combinations of objects, which he chooses to bring into existence; and every circumstance in the manner of the existence of that which is to be, thus depending entirely on his will, is known to him, because he has decreed that it shall be.

The representation of all things possible in the divine understanding

has been called by theologians *Scientia simplicis intelligentiæ* : and the knowledge which God, from eternity, had of all that he was to produce has been called *scientia visionis*. Amongst the objects of the former knowledge are to be ranked all those things, the reality of which would have been the same, although no creature had ever been produced, such as the existence of God, his attributes, and all those abstract propositions which are eternally and immutably true. We attain the knowledge of abstract propositions by rising to them from the contemplation of particular objects : but this is a tedious method, suited to the imperfection of our natures. The truth of the propositions is totally independent of the existence of the particular objects by which they are suggested to us. That three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles would be true, although no triangle had ever been drawn. By a perfect mind the truth of such general propositions is recognised before the objects are produced ; and the knowledge which the Supreme Being has of the possibilities of things, necessarily involves a knowledge of these abstract propositions ; because the very circumstance which renders the existence of many things impossible is, that they cannot exist without a contradiction to some of those abstract propositions which are always true. In defining *scientia visionis*, I called it the knowledge which God, from eternity, had of all that he was to produce. The reason why the words ‘from eternity’ were inserted in the definition, requires particular attention upon this subject. Since the infinite perfection of the nature of God excludes the idea of change in his purposes, of increase to his knowledge, or of succession in his perception of objects, it follows, that the choice, out of things possible, of those which he determined to bring into existence, was not made in time, at the successive periods at which his creatures appeared ; but that the whole plan of what was to be produced was forever present to his mind. There was a time when all the objects of the *scientia visionis* were future. At that time their futurition, that is, their being to pass in succession from the state of possibility to the state of existence, was known to God, merely as being the result of his own determination. After the execution of this determination commenced, some of the objects of the *scientia visionis* became past ; others became present, and others continued future. But all are equally in the view of the divine mind. There is to him no more fatigue or imperfection in the remembrance of what is past, or the foresight of what is future, than in the perception of what now is. Indeed, there is an impropriety in using the words remembrance or foresight, when we speak of the knowledge of God ; and it is only the narrowness of our conceptions, and the poverty of our language, which compel us to apply such terms to his clear, unvarying intuition of the whole series of objects which derive their existence from his pleasure.

The two kinds of knowledge which have now been explained, are understood, in the Calvinistic system, to comprehend all that can be known. There are no conceivable objects but those of which it can be affirmed, either that they may be, or that they may not be. Of things which may not be, this only can be distinctly known, that they are impossible ; and a being, who knows all the things that may be, knows also what are the things which may not be ; for every thing

that does not enter into the complete representation of things possible, which is present to his mind, is known, by that circumstance, to be impossible. *Scientia simplicis intelligentiæ*, then, exhausts the subjects of knowledge, in respect of the possibility or impossibility of their existence; but it does not imply any knowledge of the actual existence of those things which are possible; for from this proposition, a thing may be, this other proposition, it shall be, does by no means follow. Hence *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ* was called by the schoolmen *scientia indefinita*, as not determining the existence or the non-existence of any object out of the Deity. But *scientia visionis*, on the other hand, was called *scientia definita*, because the existence of all the objects of this knowledge, whether they be past, present, or future, is determinate; in other words, it is not more certain that what is past has had an existence, and that what is present now exists, than that what God foresees as future shall exist hereafter. If, therefore, *scientia visionis* be joined to *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ*, every thing that can be known is comprehended; in other words, if nothing can exist without the will of the First Cause, and if the First Cause, who knows all things that are possible, knows also what things he wills to produce, then he knows every thing. There is nothing that does not fall under one or other of these kinds of knowledge. We have already seen that all which can be known of things that may not be, belongs to the *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ*; and of the things that may be, either a thing is possible, but not future, and then it belongs to this kind of knowledge also; or it both may be, and shall be, and then it belongs to the *scientia visionis*. To state the thing still more plainly, all things which may exist are either things which shall be, or things which shall not be: the latter remain amongst things possible, the objects of *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ*; the former pass from the number of things barely possible into the number of the objects of *scientia visionis*.

Those who consider all the objects of knowledge as comprehended under one or other of the kinds that have been explained, are naturally conducted to that enlarged conception of the extent of the divine decree, from which the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination unavoidably follows. The divine decree is the determination of the divine will to produce the universe, that is, the whole series of beings and events that were then future. The parts of this series arise in succession; but all were, from eternity, present to the divine mind; and no cause that was at any time to operate, or no effect that was at any time to be produced in the universe, can be excluded from the original decree, without supposing that the decree was at first imperfect, and afterwards received accessions. The determination to produce this world, understanding by that word the whole combination of beings, and causes, and effects, that were to come into existence, arose out of the view of all possible worlds, and proceeded upon reasons to us unsearchable, by which this world that now exists appeared to the divine wisdom the fittest to be produced. I say, the determination to produce this world proceeded upon reasons; because we must suppose that, in forming the decree, a choice was exerted, that the Supreme Being was at liberty to resolve either that he would create, or that he would not create; that he would give his

work this form or that form, as he chose; otherwise we withdraw the universe from the direction of a Supreme Intelligence, and subject all things to blind fatality. But if a choice was exerted in forming the decree, the choice must have proceeded upon reasons; for a choice made by a wise being, without any ground of choice, is a contradiction in terms. At the same time it is to be remembered, that as nothing then existed but the Supreme Being, the only reason which could determine him in choosing what he was to produce, was its appearing to him fitter for accomplishing the end which he proposed to himself, than any thing else which he might have produced. Hence *scientia visionis* is called by theologians *scientia libera*. To *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ* they gave the epithet *naturalis*, because the knowledge of all things possible arises necessarily from the nature of the Supreme Mind; but to *scientia visionis* they gave the epithet *libera*, because the qualities and extent of its objects are determined, not by any necessity of nature, but by the will of the Deity. Although, in forming the divine decree, there was a choice of this world, proceeding upon a representation of all possible worlds, it is not to be conceived that there was any interval between the choice and the representation, or any succession in the parts of the choice. In the divine mind, there was an intuitive view of that immense subject, which it is not only impossible for our minds to comprehend at once, but in travelling through the parts of which we are instantly bewildered; and one decree, embracing at once the end and the means, ordained, with perfect wisdom, all that was to be.

The condition of the human race entered into this decree. It is not, perhaps, the most important part of it when we speak of the formation of the universe, but it is a part which, even were it more insignificant than it is, could not be overlooked by the Almighty whose attention extends to all his works, and which appears, by those dispensations of his providence that have been made known to us, to be interesting in his eyes. A decree respecting the condition of the human race includes the history of every individual: the time of his appearing upon the earth; the manner of his existence while he is an inhabitant of the earth, as it is diversified by the actions which he performs, and by the events, whether prosperous or calamitous, which befall him; and the manner of his existence after he leaves the earth, that is, his future happiness or misery. A decree respecting the condition of the human race also includes the relations of the individuals to one another: it fixes their connexions in society, which have a great influence upon their happiness and their improvement; and it must be conceived as extending to the important events recorded in Scripture, in which the whole species have a concern. Of this kind is the sin of our first parents, the consequence of that sin reaching to all their posterity, the mediation of Jesus Christ appointed by God as a remedy for these consequences, the final salvation, through this Mediator, of one part of the descendants of Adam, and the final condemnation of another part, notwithstanding the remedy. These events arise at long intervals of time, by a gradual preparation of circumstances, and the operation of various means. But by the Creator, to whose mind the end and the means were at once present, these events were beheld in intimate connexion with one another, and in conjunc-

tion with many other events to us unknown ; and consequently all of them, however far removed from one another as to the time of their actual existence, were comprehended in that one decree by which he determined to produce the world.

Hence it may be observed how idly they are employed, who presume to settle the order of the divine decrees, and how insignificant are the controversies upon this subject, which in the days of our fathers divided those who were agreed as to the general principles of Calvinism. One side were called Supralapsarians, because in their conceptions of the order of the divine decrees respecting the human race, they ascended above the fall, and considered God as regarding men before they were created, and as resolving to manifest his attributes by the whole series of events which he ordained concerning the race, from the creation of Adam till the consummation of all things. The other side were called Sublapsarians, because they rose no higher than the fall, but considered God as regarding men in the wretched situation to which that event had reduced them, as providing means for their recovery, and as conducting some to eternal life by these means, while he left others in misery. The distinction was allowed, even at the time when it engrossed the attention of theologians, not to be essential : but the good sense of modern times has almost effaced the remembrance of it ; because it is now understood that we may employ such illustrations and arrangements of the subject as we find most useful to assist our conceptions, and that we may differ from one another in these illustrations and arrangements, without forsaking the general principles which I have been delineating ; provided we remember that, although the narrowness of our faculties obliges us to conceive of the divine decree in parts, these parts were in the divine mind without separation and without priority ; and that, whether we ascend higher or lower in our statement of that part of the divine decree which we call the doctrine of predestination, that doctrine is intimately connected with a series of events, the beginning and the end of which our minds are incapable of following.

Having thus unfolded that view of the divine foreknowledge upon which the doctrine of predestination rests in the Calvinistic system, I shall next explain some of the terms commonly used by those who hold this doctrine, that the true meaning of the Calvinists may be fully understood, before we proceed to compare their system with those formerly stated, or to examine the difficulties with which it is attended. For this purpose, I quote the following words of our Confession of Faith, chapter iii.

“ 3. By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.

“ 4. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed ; and their number is so certain and definite, that it cannot be either increased or diminished.

“ 5. Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath chosen in Christ, unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or per-

severance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto ; and all to the praise of his glorious grace.

“ 6. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by his Spirit working in due season ; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

“ 7. The rest of mankind, God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice.”

I quote also the seventeenth article of the Church of England, in the meaning and even in the expression of which, there is a striking agreement with part of the preceding paragraphs from the Confession of Faith.

“ Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God’s purpose, by his Spirit working in due season : they, through grace, obey the calling : they be justified freely : they be made sons of God by adoption : they be made like the image of his only-begotten Son Jesus Christ : they walk religiously in good works ; and at length, by God’s mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.”

These quotations suggest the following propositions, which may be considered as constituting the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, and in which there is an explication of most of the terms.

1. God chose out of the whole body of mankind, whom he viewed in his eternal decree as involved in guilt and misery, certain persons who are called the elect, whose names are known to him, and whose number, being unchangeably fixed by his decree, can neither be increased nor diminished ; so that the whole extent of the remedy offered in the gospel is conceived to have been determined beforehand by the divine decree.

2. As all the children of Adam were involved in the same guilt and misery, the persons thus chosen had nothing in themselves to render them more worthy of being elected than any others ; and therefore the decree of election is called in the Calvinistic system absolute, by which word is meant, that it arises entirely from the good pleasure of God, because all the circumstances which distinguish the elect from others are the fruit of their election.

3. For the persons thus chosen, God, from the beginning, appointed the means of their being delivered from corruption and guilt ; and

by these means, effectually applied in due season, he conducts them at length to everlasting life.

4. Jesus Christ was ordained by God to be the Saviour of these persons, and God gave them to him to be redeemed by his blood, to be called by his Spirit, and finally to be glorified with him. All that Christ did in the character of Mediator, was in consequence of this original appointment of the Father, which has received from many divines the name of the Covenant of Redemption; a phrase which suggests the idea of a mutual stipulation between Christ and the Father, in which Christ undertook all that work which he executed in his human nature, and which he continues to execute in heaven, in order to save the elect; and the Father promised that the persons for whom Christ died should be saved by his death. According to the tenor of this covenant of redemption, the merits of Christ are not considered as the cause of the decree of election, but as a part of that decree; in other words, God was not moved by the mediation of Christ to choose certain persons out of the great body of mankind to be saved; but having chosen them, he conveys all the means of salvation through the channel of this mediation.

5. From the election of certain persons, it necessarily follows that all the rest of the race of Adam are left in guilt and misery. The exercise of the divine sovereignty, in regard to those who are not elected, is called Reprobation; and the condition of all having been originally the same, reprobation is called absolute in the same sense with election. In reprobation, there are two acts, which the Calvinists are careful to distinguish. The one is called Preterition, the passing by those who are not elected, and withholding from them those means of grace which are provided for the elect. The other is called Condemnation, the act of condemning those who have been passed by, for the sins which they commit. In the former act, God exercises his good pleasure, dispensing his benefits as he will: in the latter act, he appears as a Judge, inflicting upon men that sentence which their sins deserve. If he had bestowed upon them the same assistance which he prepared for others, they would have been preserved from that sentence: but as their sins proceeded from their own corruption, they are thereby rendered worthy of punishment; and the justice of the Supreme Ruler is manifested in condemning them, as his mercy is manifested in saving the elect.

SECTION IV.

I SHALL in this section advert to the points of difference in the three systems which have been mentioned, and to the difficulties in which the peculiarities of the two systems, that admit of being compared, are supposed to involve those by whom they are defended.

The Socinian and Calvinistic systems are so diametrically opposite, that they do not admit of being compared. For the Socinian, withdrawing future contingent events from the foreknowledge of the Supreme Being, either proceeds upon the principles of materialism.

according to which the actions of men are events of the same order, arising unavoidably by the same laws of nature, with the phenomena of the heavens and the earth; or it excludes the possibility of an eternal decree respecting the future condition of men. The first of these alternatives is adopted by Dr. Priestley: the second was adopted by Socinus and his followers. But neither the one nor the other presents what can appear, to those who hold the received principles of natural religion, a system of predestination. Accordingly Socinus says,* that all those places of Scripture, which treat of the divine decree of saving certain men, are to be so explained, *Ut non certi quidam homines nominatim intelligantur, sed genus quoddam hominum*. And one of his followers, speaking in the name of the Socinians, says, that they reject, as hurtful to piety and contrary to Scripture, both the predestination and reprobation of individuals, and also the foreknowledge that some are to make a right use of their liberty, and others to abuse it; and that they assert nothing more than this, that God has predestinated to eternal life all whosoever shall, to the utmost of their power, continue to the end in obedience to his precepts, and that he has reprobated all whosoever shall not obey. *Itaque electio et reprobatio in genere prorsus est certa et immutabilis, in individuo autem mutabilis est.*†

The Arminian system agrees with the Calvinistic in admitting that contingent events, such as the determinations and actions of men, are foreseen by God; and this fundamental principle, without which there can be no predestination, being common to both, it is possible to compare the manner of its being applied in the two systems. Both agree in admitting that there is a peremptory decree by which the Supreme Being, from all eternity, unalterably fixed the everlasting condition of man; but the precise difference between them is this. The Arminians hold that God made this peremptory decree upon the foresight of the faith and good works of some, of the infidelity and impenitence of others; *i. e.* God, foreseeing from all eternity that some would repent and believe, elected them to everlasting life; and foreseeing that others would continue in sin and unbelief, left them to perish. The Calvinists, on the other hand, say, that the faith and good works of the elect are the consequences of their election, and are foreseen by God, because he determined to produce them; that, being the fruits of his determination, they cannot be regarded as the cause of it; and therefore that the election of some, and the reprobation of others, are to be resolved into the good pleasure of God, acting indeed upon the wisest reasons, but not originally moved by the foresight of any circumstance in the former rendering them more worthy of being elected than the latter.

The first thing to be attended to, in comparing these two systems, is the manner of that foresight upon which the Arminian system rests, and from which result all the points of difference between it and the Calvinistic. It is a foresight of the faith and good works of some, in consequence of which they are elected; of the infidelity and impenitence of others, in consequence of which they are reprobated. But this is a foresight which the Arminians do not class either under

* Socin. Prælect. cap. 13.

† Stapfer. iii. 415.

scientia simplicis intelligentiæ, or under *scientia visionis* :—not under the first, which is conversant about things possible, or those abstract relations which are independent of actual existence ; whereas this foresight is conversant about objects which are certainly to exist, and whose future existence, as foreseen by God, has power to produce a decree :—not under the second, which is the knowledge of all things that God has determined to produce ; whereas this foresight is conceived to be antecedent to the determination of God, being the cause of his decree respecting the condition of those persons whose conduct is foreseen.

To this kind of foresight, thus distinguished from *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ*, and from *scientia visionis*, they gave the name of *scientia media*, considering it as in the middle between the two. The term was first invented by Molina, a Spanish Jesuit, and a professor of divinity in Portugal. It was the leading principle of a book which he published in 1588, entitled, “*Liberi arbitrii concordia cum gratiæ donis, divinâ præscientiâ, providentiâ, predestinatione, et reprobatione* :” and it has been adopted by all who hold the system of Arminius. *Scientia media* is the knowledge, neither of events that are barely possible, nor of events that are absolutely decreed by God, but of events that are to happen upon certain conditions. When it is applied to the doctrine of predestination, there arises out of it the following system. God from eternity took into his view the natural dispositions of men, the circumstances in which they were to be placed, and the objects which were to be presented to them. From this view, he foresaw the conduct which they were to pursue, and he made their conduct, thus foreseen, the measure according to which he determined to administer the means of grace, and to fix their everlasting happiness or misery. To state the matter more shortly : God foresees what the conduct of men will be in certain situations ; upon this foresight he determines their situations ; and thus by *scientia media* the free agency of man is reconciled with that prescience, which is implied in the conception of a perfect Mind, who rules the universe.

The Calvinists do not admit that the kind of knowledge, called by this new name, is really different from the two species formerly stated, under which it appears to them that all the objects which can be known are comprehended : and the reasoning which they employ is to this purpose. If it is meant by *scientia media* that God knows every supposable case ; that all the combinations which can arise in every situation were present to his mind ; and that he is as well acquainted with what might have happened in any given circumstances as with what will happen ; this is *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ*. If by *scientia media*, or, as it is sometimes called, conditionate foreknowledge, be meant that God sees what is to be, not singly, but as depending upon something going before it, this is *scientia visionis*. For nothing stands alone and unrelated in the universe : every event arises out of something antecedent, and is fruitful of consequences. What is called hypothetical necessity, by which no more is meant than this, if one thing is, another shall be, pervades the whole system of creation, and is the very thing which constitutes a system. Events, therefore, are not to be considered as the less ordained by God, because they are dependent upon conditions, since

the conditions are of his appointment, and the manner in which the event depends upon the conditions is known to him ; so that if the conduct of men be considered as arising out of their circumstances, their temper, and the objects presented to them, it is as much a branch of the *scientia visionis* as the circumstances, the temper, and the objects out of which it arises. But if by *scientia media* we mean not merely the knowledge of all that is possible, not merely the knowledge of all future events in connexion with all present circumstances, but the knowledge of an event that is to be, although it did not enter into the decree of God, it follows, from the principles stated in the preceding section, that there can be no such knowledge. For, 1. every future event derives its futurity from the decree of God. To say, therefore, that God sees an event before he has decreed that it shall be, is to say that he views as future, an event which is merely possible ; in other words, that he views an event not as it is. But, 2. could we suppose that some events were future, which God had not decreed, his knowledge of these events would be reduced to that kind of conjecture which we form with regard to what shall be, from attending to all the previous circumstances out of which it may be conceived to arise, instead of being that clear, infallible, intuitive prescience of the whole series of causes and effects, which seems essential to the perfection of the divine understanding. And still farther, 3. supposing that, in some inconceivable manner, future events, not decreed by him, were as certainly foreknown as those which he had decreed, here would be a part of the universe withdrawn from the government of the Supreme Ruler ; something that is to come into existence independently of him, the futurity of which, being antecedent to his will, becomes the rule of his determination.

Upon these principles the Calvinists, maintaining the sovereignty of the Deity, reject the third sense of *scientia media*, which is the only sense that is of any use in the Arminian system. They conceive it impossible that any thing, which is to be in the creation, can be the foundation of the divine decree concerning the creature, because every circumstance respecting the existence of the creature is dependent upon the divine will ; and they adhere to their own division of the divine knowledge as complete, because the things which may be, and the things which God hath willed to be, comprehend all the objects that can be known.

There are several passages of Scripture which the Arminians adduce in proof of *scientia media*. Of this kind is the following. 1 Sam. xxiii. 10—13. “ David said, O Lord God of Israel, thy servant hath certainly heard that Saul seeketh to come to Keilah, to destroy the city for my sake. Will the men of Keilah deliver me up into his hands? Will Saul come down, as thy servant hath heard? And the Lord said, He will come down: they will deliver thee up. Then David arose and departed out of Keilah: and it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah, and he forebore to go forth.” Saul’s coming down, and the people’s delivering up David, depended upon the condition of David’s remaining in the city. As the condition did not take place, the event did not happen: and therefore here, it is said, is an instance of an event not decreed by God, for then it must have happened, yet foretold by him ; in other words, here, it is said,

is an instance of *scientia media*, the foreknowledge of an event depending upon a condition. But the Calvinists consider this as an instance of *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ*. Amidst the possible combinations of objects which are present to the divine mind, this was one, that if David remained in Keilah, Saul would come down, and the people of the city would deliver him up. The connexion between his remaining, Saul's coming down, and the conduct of the people, was what God saw; and at the request of David he declared that connexion. But we must entertain as low an opinion of the divine foreknowledge as the Socinians do, if we suppose that he foresaw the actual existence of any of the events thus connected. To the *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ* there appeared a chain, of which David's remaining in Keilah was one link: to the *scientia visionis* there appeared another chain, of which it was not a link. God knew what would have happened in the one case; he knew what was to happen in the other: but it is a sophism to say that he foresaw what would have happened, when he knew it was not to happen; and this sophism is at the bottom of all the reasonings adduced to prove that there is in God the certain foreknowledge of any events but those which he has decreed to be.

In the same manner the Calvinists explain that expression of our Lord, Mat. xi. 21, which appears to be a still clearer instance of *scientia media*. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin, woe unto thee, Bethsaida; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." Here is a declaration, consequently a knowledge, of the event which would have happened, had the constitution of the universe admitted of the works of our Lord being done in Tyre and Sidon. This event was possible, before the Creator adopted that constitution of the universe which now is: it would have taken place had a particular constitution been adopted; but its existence being excluded by the decree which, adopting the present constitution, includes the objects about which *scientia visionis* is conversant, it remains amongst the objects of *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ*. So all the promises of happiness which men shall realize if they prove obedient, all the expressions of regret at their missing the happiness which they might have attained if they had been obedient, and all the threatenings of misery which they shall incur if they disobey,—all conditional propositions of this kind, with which the Scriptures abound, are to be considered not as intimations of the knowledge which God has of the futurity of any of these events, but merely as enunciations of one branch of that hypothetical necessity which pervades the system of the universe—the branch by which happiness is connected with virtue, and misery with vice.

Such is the different manner in which the Arminians and the Calvinists conceive of the foreknowledge of God. The Arminians, admitting that all events, of whatever kind, are foreknown by the Supreme Being, but desirous to exempt the actions of men from the influence of his decree, have adopted the term *scientia media*, in order to express a species of knowledge in the divine mind different from *scientia simplicis intelligentiæ*, and from *scientia visionis*. But to the Calvinists, this new term, invented by Molina, appears to

be an attempt to establish a distinction where there is not a difference: for according to them, every thing that is to exist is decreed by God; it derives its futurity from his decree, and it is foreseen because it is decreed.

This difference in the manner of conceiving of the divine foreknowledge is the foundation of the difference between the Arminian and the Calvinistic systems, all the distinguishing features of which are instantly perceived, when the different conceptions of the divine foreknowledge, that have been explained, are applied to the great subject about which the systems are conversant. The plan of the Arminian system is this. God, having decreed to give his Son to be the Saviour of all men, having determined to save by Jesus Christ them that repent and believe, and having fixed a certain administration of the means of grace sufficient to bring all men to salvation, foresaw what persons would, under this administration, repent and believe, and them he elected to everlasting life. The plan of the Calvinistic system is this. God having, from all eternity, chosen a certain number of persons, did, in time, give his Son to be their Saviour; he bestows upon them, through him, that grace which effectually determines them to repent and believe, and so effectually conducts them, by faith and good works, to everlasting life. In the Arminian system, the faith and good works of some persons are viewed as independent of the decree by which they are elected. In the Calvinistic system, they are considered as the fruit of election; and they were, from eternity, known to God, because they were, in time, to be produced by the execution of his decree. In the Arminian system, it is conceived that, although there are many who do not repent and believe, yet means sufficient to bring men to salvation are administered to all; from which it follows, that, antecedently to the decree of election, these elected persons must have been considered as distinguished from others, by some predisposition in respect to faith and good works; so that the doctrine of original sin can be admitted into this system only under such limitations as render it consistent with such predisposition. In the Calvinistic system, predestination being an appointment to the means as well as to the end, and all the conditions of salvation being given with Christ, by the decree of election, to those who are elected, every conception of any original superiority, or any ground of boasting, by nature, is excluded; and the doctrine of original sin is admitted to the extent of representing all men as involved in the same guilt and misery, as equally unable to extricate themselves, and as discriminated from one another by the mere good pleasure of God. In the Arminian system, Christ being conceived as given by God to be the Saviour of all the children of Adam, and as having purchased for all men a sufficient administration of the means of grace, what is called *impetratio salutis* may be of much wider extent than what is called *applicatio salutis*. God wills all men to be saved, upon condition that they repent and believe; but the fulfilment of the condition is conceived, in this system, to depend upon man; and, therefore, the purpose which, in the eternal counsel of divine love, extended to all, is attained with regard to many, or to few, according to the use which they make of the means of grace afforded them. In the Calvinistic system, what is called *applicatio*

salutis is conceived to be of equal extent with *impetratio salutis*. To all those whom God from the beginning decreed to save, he affords the means which infallibly conduct them to salvation: it is not in the power of man to increase or diminish their number; and the divine purpose is effectual to the very extent to which it was originally formed.

This view of the points of difference between the Arminian and Calvinistic systems, suggests the principal difficulties that are peculiar to each, which I shall in this place barely mention. The difficulties under which the Arminian system labours, are three.

1. It is not easy to reconcile the infinite diversity of situations, and the very unfavourable circumstances in which many nations, and some individuals of all nations are placed, with one fundamental position of the Arminian system, that to all men there are administered means sufficient to bring them to salvation.

2. It is not easy to reconcile those views of the degeneracy of human nature, and those lessons of humility and self-abasement in the sight of God which both Scripture and reason inculcate, with another fundamental position of that system, that the faith and good works of those who are elected, did not flow from their election, but were foreseen by God as the grounds of it.

3. It is not easy to reconcile the immutability and efficacy of the divine counsel, which enter into our conceptions of the First Cause, with a purpose to save all, suspended upon a condition which is not fulfilled with regard to many.

The difficulties attending the Calvinistic system, however much they may have the appearance of being multiplied by a variety of expressions, are reducible to two.

1. It appears to be inconsistent with the nature of man, to destroy his liberty, and to supersede his exertions, that they who are elected should be effectually determined to repent and believe.

2. It appears inconsistent with the goodness and justice of God, that when all were involved in the same guilt and misery, he should ordain the effectual means of being delivered out of that condition only to a part of the human race, leaving the rest infallibly to perish. And if this be a true account of the divine dispensation, it seems to be a necessary consequence, that all the moral evil which is in the world, and all the misery arising from that moral evil, either here or hereafter, are to be ascribed to God.

I have mentioned the difficulties peculiar to the two systems in this place, because they are suggested by the general view already given of the points of difference between them. But, in order to discern the force of the difficulties, and to judge of the attempts that have been made to remove them, it is necessary to attend more particularly to the account that is given, in each system, of the application of the remedy. I shall proceed, therefore, now to this third subject of discussion, respecting the gospel remedy; and, from the complete view which we shall thus attain, of the characteristical features of the two systems, we shall be qualified to estimate the difficulties that adhere to each, and prepared to weigh the amount of the evidence which each professes to derive from Scripture.

CHAPTER VIII.

OPINIONS CONCERNING THE APPLICATION OF THE REMEDY.

As it is unquestionably the doctrine of Scripture, that none partake of the salvation which the Gospel was given to afford, but those who repent and believe, we are entitled to say that the remedy offered in the Gospel is connected with a certain character of mind. The extent of the remedy being thus limited in so far that it reaches only to persons of that character, I employ the phrase, *The Application of the Remedy*, in order to express the production of that character; and I consider systems as differing from one another in respect of the application of the remedy, when they differ as to the manner in which the character is produced.

From the distinguishing features of the Socinian system, it will be perceived that, as it denies several of those fundamental principles on which the Arminians and Calvinists agree, it cannot be compared with them in respect to the application of the remedy. The Socinians adopt that doctrine which was introduced by Pelagius about the beginning of the fifth century, that the moral powers of human nature are not in the least injured by the sin of our first parents, but that all the children of Adam are as able to yield a perfect obedience to the commands of God as he was at his creation. They admit that men may be led, by the strength of passion, by unfavourable circumstances, and by imitation, into such sins as separate them from the favour of God, and render it difficult for them to return to the obedience of his laws; but they hold that this difficulty never amounts to a moral impossibility; and that at what time soever a sinner forsakes his transgressions, he is forgiven, not upon account of what Christ did, but from the essential goodness of the divine nature. They acknowledge that the Gospel gives to a sinful world more gracious and more effectual assistance in returning to their duty, than ever was afforded before; but they consider this assistance as arising solely from the clear revelation there given of the nature and the will of God, from the example there proposed, and from the hope of eternal life, that gift of God which is peculiar to this religion. By its doctrines and its promises, it presents to the human mind the strongest motives to obedience. All, therefore, who live in a Christian country, enjoy an outward assistance in the discharge of their duty, of very great value: and those who receive the Gospel as the word of God, feel the power of it in their hearts. This inward power, the influence of the doctrine of Christ upon the mind, the Socinians understand to be, in many places of the New Testament, the whole import of these expressions,

“the Spirit of God,” the “Spirit of life,” the “Spirit of the Lord.” For as they deny that the Spirit is a person distinct from the Father and the Son, they are obliged to consider all the expressions from which the Trinitarians infer the personality of the Spirit, as figures, or circumlocutions; and when it is said, “we walk after the Spirit—the Spirit of life makes us free—where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty—ye are washed and sanctified by the Spirit of our God,” they find it easy to evade the argument which these and numberless phrases of the same kind are supposed to contain, by understanding the meaning of the sacred writers to be no more than this, that the influence of the doctrine and promises of the Gospel upon the mind, when they are firmly believed and cordially embraced, produces such effects.

From these fundamental principles of the Socinian system it follows, that the application of the remedy is conceived in that system to be purely the work of man; that, as even without the advantages which the Gospel affords, he may, in every situation, by the mere use of his natural powers, do what is of itself sufficient to deliver him from the evils of sin, so his improving the assistance communicated by the Christian revelation, in such a manner as to attain the character connected with the enjoyment of its blessings, arises not in any degree from the agency of a superior being upon his mind, but is an exercise of his own power depending wholly upon himself.* It is one of those future contingencies which the Socinians suppose to be withdrawn from the divine foresight; and predestination according to them is nothing more than the purpose of calling both Jews and Gentiles to the knowledge of the truth, and the hope of eternal life by Jesus Christ—a purpose which God from the beginning formed, without knowing whether the execution of this purpose would have the effect of bringing any individual to heaven. Neither the extent nor the application of the remedy entered into his decree; but God did all that he proposed to do by giving the revelation, leaving to men to make use of it as they thought fit, and to receive such reward and such punishment as they shall appear to him to deserve.

This system, which as I said before attempts to get rid of difficulties by degrading the character of the Supreme Being, and excluding some of the first principles of religion, does not fall within a comparative view of the different systems of predestination; and there remain to be considered only two opinions concerning what I call the application of the remedy, which we distinguish by the names of Arminian and Calvinistic. Of each of these opinions I shall give a fair statement; by which I mean, that I shall endeavour to show in what manner the Arminian opinion is separated from Socinian principles by those who hold it, and in what light the Calvinistic opinion is represented by those who appear to understand best the grounds upon which it may be defended; and from this fair statement I shall proceed to canvass the difficulties, formerly mentioned, which adhere to these two systems of predestination.

The Arminians and Calvinists differ as to the measure of that injury which the moral powers of human nature received from the trans

* A Deo habemus quod homines sumus, a nobis ipsis quod justi.—*Pelagius*.

gression of our first parents: but they agree in acknowledging that man has fallen from his original rectitude; that there is an universal corruption of the whole race, the influence of which extends to the understanding, the will, and the affections; that in this state no man is of himself capable of giving any uniform and effectual resistance to temptation, of extricating himself from the dominion of sin, or of attaining, by the exercise of his own powers, the character which is connected with a full participation of the blessings of the Gospel. They agree that the Father of spirits can act upon the minds of men so as to administer a remedy to this corruption, and to recover them to the practice of virtue; and they think it probable, even from the light of nature, that he will exert his divine power, and employ that various access which his continual presence with his creatures gives him, in accomplishing this gracious purpose. They find the hope of this expressed, as a dictate of reason, in many passages of heathen writers; they find it inspiring all the prayers for divine assistance which occur both in the Old and in the New Testament; and they find it confirmed by many promises, which good men under the dispensation of the law embraced, but the complete fulfilment of which was looked for as one of the peculiar characters of that better dispensation which the law announced. When they read these words of Jeremiah, quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, x. 16, 17, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them: and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more,"—they conceive the prophet and the apostle to have understood, that with the pardon of sin—that blessing which was typified by the sacrifices of the law, but is truly obtained by the sacrifice of the cross,—there is conjoined under the Gospel an influence exerted by the Almighty upon the hearts and the minds of Christians; and that these two taken together make up the character and the excellency of that better covenant which came in place of the first. The Arminians and Calvinists agree farther, that the Holy Ghost is a person distinct from the Father and the Son; that he is a divine person; and that he bears a part in accomplishing the salvation of mankind; that he inspired the prophets, who from the beginning of the world spake of this salvation, and cherished the expectation of it in the breasts of pious men; that having been given without measure to the man Christ Jesus, he descended, in fulfilment of his promise at the day of Pentecost, upon his apostles, and endowed them with those extraordinary powers which were necessary for the successful publication of the Gospel; that he continues to be the fountain of all spiritual influence—the distributor of those gifts to men which Jesus Christ received; and that the Father in all ages, upon account of the intercession of the Son, gives the Holy Spirit to his children. The Arminians and the Calvinists agree, that by the distribution of these gifts, the Holy Ghost exercises the office of the Sanctifier and Comforter of Christians; that he opens their understandings; that he renews them in the spirit of their minds; that he inclines their hearts to obey the truth; that he helps their infirmities; that all the graces in which they abound are the fruits of the Spirit; and that as many as are the children of God are led by the Spirit of God. They agree farther in

expressing these influences of the Spirit by the word Grace. The Socinians contend that this use of the word is not warranted by Scripture ; that the word in general signifies favour ; that it is applied in a variety of meanings ; but that as there is no unequivocal instance of the sacred writers employing this word to express an influence exerted by God upon the mind, all that is said in the systems of theology about grace is founded upon a perversion of Scripture. To the Arminians and Calvinists, on the other hand, it appears that there are passages in the New Testament, where the sense requires that the word be understood with the meaning which they affix to it. Of this kind are Heb. iv. 16, 1 Cor. xv. 10. The controversy about the Scripture meaning of the word grace is not of much importance. Although in this, as in many other instances, the Scriptures may have been quoted and applied more from a regard to the sound than to the sense, and although the word grace may have been often understood to mean an influence upon the mind, when the sacred writers were speaking of the favour of God in general, or of the dispensation of the Gospel, which, being the brightest display of his favour to man, is often called the Grace of God, yet this does not afford any kind of argument against the reality of what is termed in theological language, grace, or even against the propriety of that use of the word. For it matters little what words are employed upon any subject, provided the sense affixed to them be clearly defined ; and if there is various evidence in Scripture, as the Arminians and Calvinists agree in believing, that the Spirit of God does act immediately upon the mind of man, there is no word by which an influence so fraught with blessings can be more fitly marked than by the general word *χάρις*, *grace* ; even although the passages, where the sacred writers have applied the word in that sense, were more equivocal than they really are.

With all these points of agreement, the difference between the Arminian and Calvinistic systems, as to the application of the remedy, is most material, because it respects the nature and the efficacy of that influence upon the mind, which in both systems is called by the name of grace. The Arminians, who believe that the death of Christ was an atonement for the sins of the whole world, which by redeeming all men from the curse put them into a situation in which they may be saved, believe, in conformity to this fundamental principle, that the death of Christ also purchased for all men means sufficient to bring them to salvation. And therefore, as they acknowledge that the corruption of human nature opposes obstacles to faith and repentance, which our natural powers are unable of themselves to surmount, they believe that the grace purchased by Christ restores all men to a situation, in which they may do those works which are well pleasing to God. This grace is called common, because it is given indifferently to all ; preventing, because it comes before our own endeavours ; exciting, because it stirs up our powers, naturally sluggish and averse from God. Of some measure of this grace, no man in any situation is supposed to be destitute. It accompanies the light of nature in heathen countries, as well as the preaching of the gospel in those which are Christian ; and every one who improves the measure given him is thereby prepared for more. From the smallest

degrees of this grace, and the most unfavourable circumstances in which it can be given, those who are not wanting to themselves are certainly conducted to such degrees as produce faith and repentance: and all, whose minds have been regenerated by this exciting grace, receive what the Arminians call subsequent and co-operating grace:—subsequent, because it follows after conversion;—co-operating, because it concurs with human exertions in producing those moral virtues, which, having originated in that grace which is preventing, and being carried on to perfection by that which is subsequent, are fitly called the fruits of the Spirit.

As higher degrees of grace are supposed to be given in consequence of the improvement of those which were previous, the Arminians consider the efficacy of all grace as depending upon the reception which it meets with. They cannot say that it is of the nature of grace to be effectual; for although, according to their system, it be given to all with such impartiality, that he who believes had not originally a larger portion of grace than he who does not believe, yet there are many in whom it does not produce faith and repentance. It is purely, therefore, from the event that grace is to be distinguished as effectual or ineffectual; and the same grace being given to all, there is no other cause to which the difference in the event can be ascribed, than the difference in the character of those by whom it is received. As the event of the grace of God is conceived to depend upon men, it follows, according to this system, that the grace of God may be resisted, *i. e.* the obstacles opposed by the perverseness of the human will may be such as finally to prevent the effect of this grace. Accordingly, the Arminians find themselves obliged to give such an account of the nature of grace as admits of its being resistible. It was thus described by the first Arminians:—“*Lenis suasio; nobilissimus agendi modus in conversione hominum, quæ fiat suasionibus, morali ratione consensum voluntatis producens.*” The English phrase answering to this description is Moral Suasion; and the meaning of the phrase is thus explained by the best Arminian writers. They conceive that all that impossibility of keeping the commandments of God, which arises from the corruption of human nature, is removed by the grace of God; and that, while the word of God proposes exhortations, warnings, and inducements, to man thus restored to the capacity of doing what is required of him, the Spirit of God opens his understanding to discern the force of these things, and is continually present with him, suggesting good thoughts, inspiring good desires, and by the most seasonable, friendly, and gentle counsel, inclining his mind to his duty. This seasonable, friendly, and gentle counsel is called moral suasion; but this counsel may be rejected; for herein, say the Arminians, consists the liberty of man, that with every possible reason before him to choose one course he may choose another, and the influence of any other being cannot be of such a kind as certainly and effectually to determine his choice, without destroying his nature. After all the assistance and direction, therefore, which he can derive from the grace of God, he may believe or he may not believe; he may return to the habitual practice of sin after he has been converted; and, by abusing those means of grace which he had formerly improved, he may in the end fail of attaining salvation.

The account, which I have now given of the Arminian doctrine with regard to the nature and efficacy of the grace of God, is agreeable to the three last of the five articles in which the early Arminians stated their system. In these articles they discover an anxiety to vindicate themselves from the charge of Pelagianism, or from the appearance of ascribing so much to the natural powers of man, as to render the grace of God unnecessary.

3. Man has not saving faith from himself, and, being in a state of depravity and sin, he cannot, by the exercise of his own free will, think or do any thing that is truly good; but it is necessary that he be regenerated and renewed by God in Christ through his Holy Spirit, in his mind, his affections, or his will, and all his faculties, that he may understand, think, will, and perform any good thing; according to that saying of Christ, "Without me ye can do nothing."

4. The fourth article, after saying that this grace of God is the beginning, the progress, and the perfection of all good, so that all our good works are to be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ, adds these words: But as to the manner of the operation of this grace, it is not irresistible: for it is said in Scripture of many, that they resisted the Holy Spirit.

5. The fifth article, after mentioning the strength and assistance furnished to those who are united to Christ by a true faith, expresses a doubt whether they may not by their own negligence make shipwreck of a good conscience, and forfeit their interest in Christ. The later Arminians laid aside the language of doubt upon this subject, and said without hesitation, that those who, being united to Christ by faith, had been partakers of his grace, might, through their own fault, fall from a state of grace.

The Calvinistic system gives a very different view of the application of the remedy; and the difference may be traced back to its fundamental principle, that Christ did not die for all men, but for those of every nation who are in the end to be saved. Them only he delivers from the curse, and for them only he purchases those influences of the Spirit by which faith and repentance are produced. Others enjoy in common with them the gifts of nature, the bounties of providence, the light of conscience; and all who live in a Christian country, by the motives proposed in the Gospel, and by the ordinances of religion may be restrained from many open sins, and excited to many good actions. But that grace, which forms in the mind of man the character connected with salvation, is confined to those whom God hath chosen. Being conferred in execution of an unchangeable decree, it cannot fail of attaining its effect; and, being the action of the Creator upon the mind of the creature, it is able to surmount all that opposition and resistance which arises from the corruption of human nature. It is distinguished by the Calvinists from that continual influence which the Supreme Cause exerts throughout his creation, and by which he upholds his creatures in being, preserves the faculties which he gave them, and may in some sense, be said to concur with all their actions. And it is conceived to be an extraordinary supernatural influence of the Creator, by which the disorders which sin had introduced into the faculties of human nature are corrected, and the mind is transformed and renewed, and created again unto

good works. There have not been wanting some who have attempted to explain the manner of this supernatural influence. But the wiser Calvinists, without entangling themselves in an inextricable labyrinth of expressions which after every attempt to affix clear ideas to them must remain unintelligible, rest in that caution which our Lord gave when he spoke to Nicodemus upon this subject. John iii. 7, 8. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth : so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Although we cannot give a satisfying account of the causes why the wind blows at a particular season from one quarter, or why it ceases just when it does, we do not doubt of the fact, because we see and feel its effects. So, although the manner of the operation of the Spirit is not an object of sense, and cannot be explained by words, we may be assured of the reality of the operation from its effects. When we see such a change upon the disposition and the life of the regenerate, as cannot be accounted for by any natural means, we are led to acknowledge the power of the Divine Agent by whom the change was produced ; and we perceive the propriety with which the Scriptures, in speaking of this change, make use of such expressions as being born again, creation, resurrection. For the figure used in these expressions tends to mislead, unless the action marked by them implies an exertion of power, the effect of which is independent of any co-operation or any resistance in the subject of the action ; and therefore they may be considered as indicating such an operation of the Spirit, as effectually removes that corruption of the powers of human nature which nothing less can remedy.

This supernatural influence is seldom exerted without the use of means ; in other words, although the means of removing the corruption of human nature derive their efficacy entirely from the Spirit of God, yet, in accomplishing this object, the Spirit of God ordinarily employs the exhortations, the promises and the threatenings of the word of God, the council and example of good men, and all those instruments which have a tendency to improve the human mind. Hence that change which is the work of the Spirit, is not instantaneous, but consists of many previous steps, of many preparatory dispositions and affections, and of a gradual progress in goodness ;—by all which a man is conducted from that state of degeneracy which is natural to the posterity of Adam, to the possession of that character without which none can be saved. His understanding is enlightened with the knowledge of the truth ; his will is inclined to follow the dictates of his understanding ; he pursues a certain line of conduct, because it is his choice ; and he has the feeling of the most perfect liberty, because he becomes willing to do that from which formerly he was averse. Augustine expressed the effect of this influence by the significant phrase, *victrix delectatio* ; a delight in the commandments of God, which overcomes every inferior appetite ; and all the Calvinists, when they speak of the efficacy of divine grace, would be understood to mean that the grace of God acts upon man, not as a machine, but as a reasonable being.

As the grace of God, which is conceived to derive its efficacy from

his power of fulfilling his purpose in those for whom it is destined, overcomes all the opposition with which it is at first received, so it continues to be exerted amidst all the frailty and corruption which adhere to human nature in a present state. It is not exerted to such a degree as to preserve any man from every kind of sin. For God is pleased to teach Christians humility, by keeping up the remembrance of that state out of which they were delivered, and to quicken their aspirations after higher degrees of goodness, by leaving them to struggle with temptation, and to feel manifold infirmities. But although no man is enabled in this life to attain to perfection, the grace of God preserves those to whom it is given, from drawing back to perdition. The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints flows necessarily from that decree, by which they were from eternity chosen to salvation, and from the manner in which according to the Calvinistic system the decree was executed; and all the principles of the system must be renounced before we can believe that any of those for whom Christ died, and who consequently became partakers of his grace, can fall from that grace either finally—by which is meant that they shall not in the end be saved,—or totally, by which is meant that they shall at any period of their lives commit sins so heinous and so presumptuous, and persist in them so obstinately, as at that period to forfeit entirely the divine favour.

All the parts of that delineation which I have now given, are found in Chapters IX. X. XVII. of the Confession of Faith. The whole doctrine is not expressed in the tenth Article of the Church of England: but we consider it to be implied in the seventeenth.

CHAPTER IX.

ARMINIAN AND CALVINISTIC SYSTEMS COMPARED.

AFTER the view which I have given of the two great systems of opinion concerning the extent and the application of that remedy which the gospel brings, we are prepared to estimate the difficulties that adhere to them. As every system, which, with our limited information, we can hold upon subjects so extensive and so magnificent, must be attended with difficulties, it is not incumbent upon us to answer all the questions which our system may suggest; and we have given a sufficient answer to many of them, when we show that the same questions, or others not more easily solved, are suggested by the opposite system. But as difficulties are of real weight when they imply a contradiction to some received truth, we are called to defend the system of opinion which we hold, by showing that it is not subversive of the nature of man or inconsistent with the nature of God.

 SECTION I.

THE Arminian system appears upon a general view, most satisfying to a pious and benevolent mind. Pardon procured by the death of Christ for all that repent and believe, when conjoined with an administration of the means of grace sufficient to bring all men to faith and repentance, forms a remedy suited to the extent of the disease; a remedy from which none are excluded by any circumstance foreign to themselves, and which, if it does not in the end deliver all from the evils of sin, fails, not through any defect in its own nature or any partiality in the Being from whom it proceeded, but purely through the obstinacy and perverseness of those to whom it is offered. But while this account of the gospel appears to derive, from its correspondence with our notions of the goodness and justice of God, the strongest internal recommendation, it is found to labour under these three difficulties. 1. The supposition of an administration of the means of grace sufficient to bring all men to faith and repentance, upon which this system proceeds, appears to be contradicted by fact. 2. This system, while in words it ascribes all to the grace of God, does in effect resolve our salvation into something independent of that grace. 3. This system seems to imply a failure in the purposes of the

Almighty, which is not easily reconciled with our notions of his sovereignty.

1. It does not appear agreeable to fact, that there is an administration of the means of grace sufficient to bring all men to faith and repentance. For although there is nothing in the nature of the gospel to prevent it from becoming an universal religion, yet the fact is that by much the greatest part of the world does not enjoy the benefit of its instructions.* And although the imperfect propagation of the gospel may be owing to the corruption and indifference of Christians, yet with regard to the inhabitants of those nations to whom the most distant intimation of its existence never extended, it cannot surely be said that there has been any want of inquiry on their part. The Arminians are obliged to resolve this manifest inequality in dispensing the advantages for attaining faith and repentance into the sovereignty of God, who imparts his free gifts to whom he will. Still however they do not abandon their principle; for they contend that the grace of God accompanies the light of nature, and that all who improve this universal revelation are conducted by that grace to higher degrees of knowledge. But here also the fact does not appear to accord with their system. For the light of nature, although universal, is most unequal. In many countries superstition is rendered so inveterate by education, custom, and example, and the state of society is so unfavourable to the improvement of the mind, that none of the inhabitants has the means of extricating himself from error; and even in those more enlightened parts of the world, where, by the cultivation of the powers of reason or the advantages of foreign instruction, men have risen to more honourable conceptions of the Deity, there does not appear any possibility of their attaining to the faith of Christ. For, as the apostle speaks, Rom. x. 17, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" The Socinians, indeed, say, that all in every situation who act up to the light afforded them, may be saved, without regard being had to the merits of Christ. But this opinion the Arminians strongly disclaim, and choose rather to say, that those who improve the measure of knowledge derived from the works of nature, and the grace of God which accompanies it, are, in some extraordinary manner, made acquainted with the doctrine of Christ, so as to attain before they die that faith in him which the means afforded them could not produce. And thus the Arminians are obliged, with regard to the greatest part of mankind, to give up their fundamental position, that sufficient means of grace are administered to all, and to have recourse to the production of faith by an immediate impression of the Spirit of God upon the mind. The Arminians, feeling the force of this difficulty, leave—piously and wisely leave—the fate of that great part of mankind who do not enjoy the gospel to the mercy of God in Christ; and, in their confessions of faith, they confine their doctrine concerning the universal application of the remedy, to those who are called by the word. To this call they give the name of an election to grace and to the means of salvation, which they distinguish

* Book I. Ch. ix. 4.

from an election to glory. Election to glory is the destination of eternal happiness to those who persevere in faith and good works. Election to grace is understood to be common to all who live in a Christian country, and to imply the giving to every one, by the preaching of the word and the power of the Spirit accompanying it, that grace which is sufficient to produce faith and to promote repentance unto life.

But even after the Arminians have thus corrected and limited their doctrine with regard to the sufficiency of the means of grace, there remain two objections to it in point of fact. The first arises from the very unequal circumstances in which the inhabitants of different Christian countries are placed. In some countries the Scriptures are given to the people, that they may search them; in others, they are withheld. In some countries the gospel is exhibited in a corrupt form, which tends to degrade the understanding and pervert the moral conduct; in others, it is presented in its native simplicity, as cherishing every exalted affection and forming the mind to virtue. In the same countries there are infinite diversities amongst individuals as to their intellectual powers, the measure of their information, their employments, their pursuits, their education, their society, the inducements to act properly, or the temptations to sin which arise from their manner of life. All these circumstances, having an effect upon the moral character, must be regarded in the Arminian system as a branch of the administration of the means of grace, because they are instruments which the Spirit of God may employ in that moral influence which he is considered as exerting over the mind of man. By means of these circumstances, some are placed in a more favourable situation for attaining faith than others; the same moral suasion, by which some are preserved from almost any approach to iniquity, becomes insufficient to restrain others from gross transgression; and the Sovereign of the universe, who has ordained all these circumstances, thus appears to discriminate, in respect of the means of salvation, those very persons who in this system are said to be equally elected to grace. It may be said, indeed, that the secret operation of divine grace counterbalances the diversity of outward circumstances: so that, taking the internal assistance and the external means together, all who live in a Christian country are upon a footing. This is the method of answering the objection adopted by Grotius, and other able defenders of Arminianism. But it is a departure from the principles of that system; for it is substituting, in place of an administration of the means of grace sufficient for all, an administration, in many instances defective; and, in place of an internal grace common and equal to all, a grace imparted differently to different persons, according to circumstances.

The second objection, in point of fact, to the supposition that in every Christian country there is such an administration of the means of grace as is sufficient to bring all men to faith, arises from this undeniable truth, that, amongst those to whom the gospel is preached, and in whose circumstances there is not that kind of diversity which can account for the difference, some believe and some do not believe. Some, with all the outward advantages which the publication of the gospel affords, continue the servants of sin; whilst others attain, by

the same advantages, that measure of perfection which is consistent with the present state of humanity. From this fact the Calvinists infer the reality of an inward discriminating grace, which appears to them the only satisfying account of the different fruits that proceed from the same external advantages, and which, although it is not, like the diversity of outward circumstances, an object of sense, may be certainly known by its effects. But the Arminians, instead of admitting this inference, readily answer the objection which seems to arise from this fact, by saying, that the grace which is sufficient to all, proves ineffectual with regard to many, because it is opposed. It is their own fault—the voluntary resistance which they might not have made, that prevents the grace of God from producing in them the effect which it was intended to produce in all, and which it actually does produce in others. To those who repent and believe the same sufficient grace is imparted; by them also it might be resisted; but because they do not resist, it proves effectual. Now, this is an answer to the objection; that is, it gives a reason why that grace, which the Arminians say is sufficient to all who hear the gospel, proves ineffectual with regard to many. But it remains to be inquired, whether the reason is such as ought to enter into a theological system, or whether the admitting of this reason is not pregnant with objections no less formidable to their system, than the fact which it was brought to explain. For,

2. The second difficulty under which the Arminian system labours is this, that, while in words it ascribes all to the grace of God, it does in effect resolve our salvation into something independent of that grace.

It was the principle of the Pelagians that the grace of God respects only the remission of sins, and that it is not given *in adiutorium, ne in posterum peccata committantur*. Another of their aphorisms was, *ad scientiam nos habere gratiam Christi, non ad charitatem*. Arminius and his followers were most anxious to guard their system from the appearance of approaching to these principles. They acknowledged that man in his present state is not able to think or to do any thing truly good of himself; that he must be renewed in all his faculties by the Spirit of God; and that all our good works are to be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ. They renounce, by the terms in which the articles of their faith are expressed, even that modification of the Pelagian principles which was introduced soon after they were first published, and which is known by the name of Semi-Pelagianism. It was held by the Semi-Pelagians, that, although man is unable to bring any good work to perfection, yet the first motions towards a good life, sorrow for sin, desire of pardon, purposes of obedience, and the first acts of faith in Christ, are the natural exercise of human powers, proceeding from the constitution and circumstances of man, without any supernatural grace; that to all in whom God observes these preparatory dispositions he gives, for the sake of Christ, his Holy Spirit; and that, by the influence of this Spirit continually assisting their powers, they are enabled to make progress, and to persevere in the life of faith and obedience which they had begun. But the Arminians wish to discriminate themselves from the Semi-Pelagians, by mentioning, in their confessions of faith, a pre-

venting grace, *gratia præveniens seu præcedanea*; which comes before, not only our works, but our purposes and desires of doing good;—by saying that the grace of God is the beginning as well as the progress and perfection of all good;—and by acknowledging that, without this grace, man cannot understand, or think, or will any thing that is good. All those words, however, which they multiply in speaking of the grace of God, are accompanied with a clause which very much enervates their significancy. For the conclusion of the fourth article runs thus: “With regard to the manner of the operation of that grace, it is not irresistible; for it is said, in the seventh chapter of the book of Acts, and in many other places of Scripture, that they resisted the Holy Spirit.” And, in place of the doubt expressed in the fifth article, whether those who have been united to Christ by true faith may not, by their own negligence, fall from grace, the Arminians, in the subsequent confessions of their faith, speak without hesitation of Christians who fall, through their own fault, from the faith which had been produced in them by the Spirit of God, and with regard to whom all the actions of the Spirit of God cease, because they do not fulfil the conditions required on their part. It is to be observed, that by the grace which may be resisted, the Arminians do not mean merely that grace which calls men to the knowledge of the gospel, and furnishes them with the outward means of salvation, but that influence exerted by the Spirit of God upon the mind, which they are accustomed to describe by a multitude of words; and what they mean by calling this grace irresistible, is not merely that opposition is made to it; for those who hold the corruption of human nature in the highest degree, are the most ready to admit this opposition. It is matter of experience; and none can deny that it is often mentioned in Scripture. But the Arminians, by calling the grace of God resistible, mean that it may be defeated; in other words, that the resistance, given by a person whom the Spirit of God calls to faith and obedience, may be such as to render him unfit for believing and for obeying the divine will; so that he either remains unconverted after all the operations of grace upon his soul, or he returns after a temporary conversion to the state in which he was before. Here, then, is the grace of God supposed to be unable to attain its effect of itself, and that effect supposed to depend upon the concurrence of man. It is allowed by the Arminians, that none can be saved without the grace of God; but it is not allowed that the reason why some are saved and not others, is to be found in that grace. For while the grace of God and the will of man are conceived to be partial causes, concurring in the production of the same effect, the grace of God is only a remote cause of salvation—a cause operating indifferently upon all, sufficient indeed, but often ineffectual. The proximate, specific cause of salvation, by which the effects of the universal cause are discriminated, is to be found in the qualities of the subject which receives the grace of God, since upon these qualities it depends whether this grace shall overcome or shall be counteracted.

The Arminians attempt to remove this objection to their system, by reasoning in the following manner. Although God is omnipotent, he cannot put forth his irresistible power in communicating his grace

to the mind of man, because he must govern his creatures according to their natures. But a grace which cannot be resisted would destroy the morality of human actions; and, instead of improving the character of a reasonable agent, would leave no room for any thing that deserves the name of virtue. It follows, therefore, from the nature of man, and the purpose for which grace is bestowed upon him, that it must be left in his power and in his choice, whether he will comply with it or not; in other words, the grace of God must be resistible in this sense and to this amount, that its efficacy must depend upon the concurrence of the being on whom it is exerted.

This reasoning of the Arminians constitutes one of their chief objections to the Calvinistic system, which represents the mind of man as effectually determined by the grace of God; and if the objection has all the weight which the reasoning seems to imply, that system cannot be true; for it is impossible that that can be a just account of the grace of God, which is inconsistent with the character of man, and subversive of morality. The objection will be discussed, when we advance to the difficulties that belong to the Calvinistic system. In the mean time, it is to be remembered that the Arminians, in their zeal to steer clear of this difficulty, have adopted such an account of the grace of God, as implies that, antecedently to its operations, the minds of some men are disposed to comply with it, and the minds of others to reject it; and that, in whatever words they choose to magnify the grace of God, they cannot regard it as the cause of this difference. For if the grace which is given indifferently to two persons, John and Judas, which is sufficient for both, and which may be resisted by both, is not resisted by John, and in consequence of that non-resistance conducts him to salvation, but is resisted by Judas, and in consequence of that resistance proves ineffectual with regard to him, the true cause of the efficacy and inefficacy of the grace lies in the minds of these two persons. "Thou didst give to my neighbour," may the former say, "as to me: but my will has improved what thou gavest, while the will of my neighbour has resisted all thine operations." This language, which the Arminians must suppose every one that is saved entitled to hold to the Almighty, by implying that man has something independent of the grace of God whereof he may boast, and whereby he may distinguish himself from other men in the sight of God, not only contradicts the doctrine of original sin, and those lessons of humility which the gospel uniformly teaches, but seems also to involve the Arminians themselves in contradiction. For while they say that no man is able of himself to understand, to think, or to will what is good, they suppose that only some men retain that carnal mind which the Scriptures call enmity to God, and by which the grace of God is defeated; but that others are at all times ready of themselves to yield that compliance with the influences of the Spirit, by which they are rendered effectual. And thus, while in words they ascribe all good works to the grace of God, they suspend the beginning, the progress, and the continuance of these good works upon the will of man.

3. The last difficulty which adheres to the Arminian system is, that it proceeds upon the supposition of a failure of the purpose of the

Almighty, which it is not easy to reconcile with our notions of his sovereignty.

In this system, the Almighty is conceived to have a purpose of bringing all men to salvation by Christ, and, in execution of this purpose, to furnish all men with sufficient means of salvation; yet notwithstanding this purpose, and the execution of it by the grace of God, many continue in sin. Dr. Clarke has stated the difficulty, and has given the Arminian solution of it in one of his sermons upon the grace of God; and as it is manifest from all his writings that he is there speaking his own sentiments, it will not be thought that I do any injustice to the Arminian system, by stating the solution of this third difficulty, in the words of an author so distinguished for the clearness of his conceptions, and the accuracy of his expressions, as Dr. Clarke. "The design of God in the gracious declarations of the gospel is to bring all men, by the promise of pardon, to repentance and amendment here, and thereby to eternal salvation hereafter. The only difficulty here is, that which arises and indeed very obviously, from comparing the actual events of things, with the declarations of God's gracious intention and design. If God designed by the gracious terms of the gospel to bring all men to salvation, how comes the extent of it to be confined within so narrow a compass, and the effect of it to be in experience so inconsiderable, even where in profession it seems to have so universally prevailed? The answer to this is, that in all moral matters, the intention or design of God never signifies (as it does always in natural things) an intention of the event actually and necessarily to be accomplished; but (which alone is consistent with the nature of moral things) an intention of all the means necessary on his part to the putting that event into the power of the proper and immediate agents."*

According to this solution, that determination of the actions of men, which forms part of the Calvinistic system, is inconsistent with the nature of man, because the intention of God in moral matters never can go on to the event without destroying the character of moral agents. This objection to the Calvinistic system is the same in substance with that which I stated under the former head, and will be considered afterwards. In the mean time, it is to be remembered that the Arminians are obliged either to deny that there is in God an intention to bring all men to salvation, or to admit that a great part of what is done in his creation is independent of his will. For although all the actions of wicked men in this world, and their everlasting condition hereafter, are, according to the Arminian system, foreseen by God, and being foreseen may be connected in the great plan of his providence with other events which are under his power, yet they are foreseen as arising from a cause over which he has no control,—from the will of man, which, after all his operations, determined itself in many cases to choose the very opposite of that which he intended, and endeavoured to make it choose. If it shall appear that this emancipation of the actions of the creature from the direction of the Creator is an unavoidable consequence of the character of reasonable beings, we must acquiesce in what appears to us an im-

* Serm. XII. Vol. II.

perfection in the divine government. But until the inconsistency between the providence of God, I mean not merely his foresight but his determination, and the freedom of his reasonable creatures be clearly established, we should be led, by all the views of the sovereignty of the Creator which reason and Scripture give us, to suppose that no part of the universe is withdrawn from his control: and the harmony of the great plan of Providence must appear to us inconsistent with the motley combination of natural events appointed by God, and actions of his creatures contrary to his purpose.

The amount of the three difficulties which have now been stated, may be thus shortly summed up. The Arminian system lays down as a fundamental position, an administration of the means of grace sufficient to bring all men to faith and repentance; a position which it is not possible to reconcile with what appears to be the fact: it resolves the salvation of those who are saved into the character of their mind antecedently to the operations of divine grace; and it resolves the final reprobation of others into actions performed by the creatures of God, opposite to those which he furnished them with all the means necessary for performing, and conducting to an end different from that which he intended.

SECTION II.

THE Arminian system was an attempt made by those who disclaimed Socinian principles, to get rid of the difficulties which belong to the Calvinistic system. The embarrassment and inconsistency with which we have seen that attempt to be attended, and from which very able men have not found it possible to disentangle themselves, is a proof that it is not an easy matter to devise a middle system between Socinianism and Calvinism. But if Calvinism be really involved in those insuperable difficulties which are perpetually in the mouths of its adversaries; if it subverts the nature of man, and presents the most unworthy conceptions of the Father of all, it cannot be true. The attempts to get rid of these difficulties may have been hitherto unsuccessful: but it is impossible to adopt any system to which such difficulties adhere; and it were better, it may be thought, to acquiesce under a consciousness of our own ignorance in the embarrassment of the Arminians, or even to advance to the simple unencumbered scheme of Socinus, than by following what we account truth far beyond the measure of our understandings, to confound all our notions both of God and of man.

Before we come, however, to this desperate resolution, it is proper to bestow a very careful examination upon the difficulties which belong to the Calvinistic system. They may be magnified by the misrepresentations of its enemies: they may have arisen from some weakness in the reasoning or some narrowness in the views of its friends: they may be no other difficulties than such as our minds must expect to feel in every effort to form a conception of the obscure and magnificent subjects about which the two systems are conversant: and they may belong to the Arminian, in as far as it keeps clear of

Socinianism, no less than to the Calvinistic. I enter upon the examination of these difficulties with a thorough conviction of its being possible to state them in such a manner, that they shall not afford any reasonable man a just ground for rejecting the system: and my examination of them will have the appearance, which in my situation is decent, of an apology for Calvinism. I certainly desire that every one of my students should think as favourably of that system as I do, because, if they become licentiates or ministers of this church, they have to subscribe a solemn declaration, that they believe it to be true. But their conviction ought to arise from their own study—not from my teaching. They bring with them, from their previous studies, an acquaintance with the leading principles upon which my apology turns, sufficient to enable them to judge how far it is a fair one: and even had I that attachment to a system which I am conscious I have not, which would lead me to defend it by misrepresentation, I must be sensible that this would be the certain method of giving them an unfavourable impression of the system which I wish to recommend.

The objections to the Calvinistic system, however multiplied in words or in divisions, may be reduced to two. It is conceived to be inconsistent with the nature of man as a free moral agent; and it is conceived to represent the Almighty in a light repugnant to our notions of his moral attributes.

SECTION III.

THE Calvinistic system is conceived to be inconsistent with the nature of man as a free moral agent.

It is acknowledged by all that liberty is essential to the character of a moral agent; that we are not accountable for those actions which we are compelled to perform; that in every part of our conduct, in which external force does not operate upon the motions of our bodies, we have a feeling that whatever we do we might have done otherwise; that we deserve praise for our good actions, because we might have acted wrong; and that we deserve blame for our bad actions, because we might have acted well. In these points all are agreed. But it is said by those who do not hold the Calvinistic system, that the effectual irresistible grace, which, according to that system, is communicated to the elect, and by which they are infallibly determined to a certain line of conduct, degrades them from the character of agents to that of patients,—machines acted upon by another being, and thus destroys the morality of those very actions which they are determined to perform. As it is impossible that a religion proceeding from the Author of human nature can so directly subvert the principles of that nature, the manner of applying the Gospel remedy, which is essential to the Calvinistic system, is considered as of itself a demonstrative proof that this system exhibits a false view of Christianity.

The whole force of this objection turns upon the ideas that are formed of the liberty of a moral agent. To those who form one idea

of liberty, the objection constitutes an insurmountable difficulty. To those who form another idea, it admits of a satisfying answer.

There is one idea of liberty, adopted and strenuously defended by Dr. Reid, in his *Essays on the Active Powers*, which I shall give in his words. "By the liberty of a moral agent, I understand a power over the determinations of his own will. If, in any action, he had power to will what he did, or not to will it, in that action he is free. But if, in every voluntary action, the determination of his will be the necessary consequence of something involuntary in the state of his mind, or of something in his external circumstances, he is not free; he has not what I call the liberty of a moral agent, but is subject to necessity."* The liberty here defined is sometimes called liberty of indifference, because it is supposed that, after all the circumstances which can lead to the choice of one thing are presented, the mind remains *in equilibrio*, till she proceeds to exert her own sovereign power in making the choice. The exertions of this power are conceived to be independent of every thing external: the mind alone determines; and there is no fixed infallible connexion between her determinations and any foreign object.

The definition of liberty given by Dr. Reid is that which Arminian writers adopt. Some of them speak with more accuracy than others; but all of them agree that the liberty of a moral agent consists in the self-determining power; that although he is frequently determined in his actions and resolutions by some cause foreign to the mind, he is not constantly and invariably so determined; and that as the mind has a power of choosing without any reason, it is in every case uncertain how far she will exert this power, and consequently it is uncertain what the choice of the mind will prove, until it be made. Upon this foundation the Arminians build the impossibility of an absolute decree electing particular persons to eternal life, and giving them the means of attaining it. They say that faith and repentance, being the exercise of a self-determining power, originate purely in the mind; that the Almighty cannot give an efficacious determining grace without destroying this self-determining power; and therefore that all the decrees of God, in relation to moral agents, were either from eternity suspended upon their own determinations, or become peremptory only by his foreseeing what these determinations are to be.

Although this account of the liberty of moral agents be adopted by the Arminians, it is not easily reconciled with the opinion which they profess to hold, with regard to the extent and the infallibility of the divine foreknowledge. For as the determinations of free agents are the exertions of a power which is conceived to be unconnected and uncontrolled in its operations, there does not appear to us any method by which they can be certainly foreknown. When a future event is connected with any thing present, that connexion is a principle of knowledge with regard to it; the more intimate the connexion is, the future event may be the more certainly known; and if the connexion be indissoluble, a being to whom it is known is as certain that the future event will exist, as that any present object now is. But if a future event has no connexion with any thing present, it cannot be

* Essay IV. ch. i.

seen in its cause ; and the Socinian conclusion seems to be the natural one, that it cannot be foreseen at all. The Arminians, indeed, distinguish their system from Socinianism by rejecting this conclusion. For although they consider the actions of moral agents to be contingent in this sense of the word, that they are not connected with any preceding event as their cause, and although they do not pretend to explain the manner in which such events can be certainly foreknown, yet they admit their being foreknown by God, and upon his infallible foreknowledge of them they build what they call the decree of election.

The difficulty of reconciling what has been called liberty of indifference with the infallible foreknowledge of God, is not the only objection to this account of liberty. Liberty belongs to an agent, not to a faculty. A power in the mind to determine its own determinations is either unmeaning, or supposes, contrary to the first principles of philosophy, something to arise without a cause ; and it lands those by whom it is defended in various inconsistencies. These points it is not my business to state more particularly. They are unfolded in the chapter of Mr. Locke's *Essay*, entitled, *On Power* ; and they are elucidated with much metaphysical acuteness, and with great fulness of illustration, in Edwards's *Essay on Free-will*. On the other hand, Dr. Clarke has stated the Arminian account of liberty in a close and guarded manner,—in a form the most accurate, and the least objectionable, that the subject will admit of. This statement occurs in different parts of Dr. Clarke's works ; particularly in his *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*, and in some of his replies to papers of Leibnitz. One of Dr. Whithy's discourses on the Five Points is an essay on the freedom of the will of man. The Arminian account of liberty is fully stated by King in his *Essay on the Origin of Evil* ; and there is a defence of it, loose, but copious and plausible, in the *Essay* already referred to, by Dr. Reid, *On the Liberty of moral agents*.

Without pursuing the investigation how far liberty of indifference is rational and consistent, I proceed to state the grounds of that other idea of the liberty of moral agents, which is essential and fundamental in the Calvinistic system.

The liberty of a moral agent consists in the power of acting according to his choice ; and those actions are free, which are performed without any external compulsion or restraint, in consequence of the determinations of his own mind. The determinations of the mind are formed agreeably to the laws of its nature, by the exercise of its powers in attention, deliberation, and choice : they are its own determinations, because they proceed upon the views which it entertains of the subject in reference to which it determines ; and the manner in which the determinations are formed implies that essential distinction between mind and matter, in consequence of which mind is by its constitution susceptible of a moral character. Matter is acted upon by other objects, and receives from this impulse a particular figure or motion ; but it has no consciousness of the change induced upon its state, no powers to put forth in accomplishing the change, no choice of the effect which is to follow. There is a physical impossibility that the effect can be any other than that which may be calculated from

taking into account the quantity and direction of the impulse, in conjunction with the size, the quality, and the situation of the body which receives it. But this indifference to every kind of impression, which enters into our conception of body, and in consequence of which we give it the epithets passive and inert, is repugnant to our idea of mind. We conceive that the actions of a man originate in the exertions of his mind; that powers are there put forth; that the mind makes a selection out of many objects, any one of which it was not physically impossible to choose; that in the preference given to those means which are employed to bring about an end, there is a choice—a will discovered, which renders the mind worthy of praise or blame, and gives to the conduct that direction by which it is denominated either good or bad.

This exertion of the innate powers of action, by which mind is distinguished from matter, may be called the self-determining power of the mind; and if this were all that the Arminians meant by that phrase, the Calvinists would readily join in the use of it. But it is to be observed, that a general principle of activity, and a determination to a particular mode of action, are totally different: and after we have admitted that the actions of a man originate in the exertions of his mind, it remains to be inquired what determines the mind to one kind of exertion rather than another. The Arminians say the mind determines itself; which to the Calvinists appears to be no answer to the question, because in their opinion it means no more than that the mind has a power of determining itself. They hold that no event happens, either in the natural, or in the moral world, without a cause. They hold that God, who exists necessarily, is the only Being who has the reason of his existence in himself. Because he now is, he always was, and he always will be. But every other being is contingent, *i. e.* it may be or it may not be: the reason of its existence, therefore, cannot be in itself, but must be in something else. The whole universe is contingent, deriving the reason of its existence from the will of the Creator; and every particular being and event in the universe has that connexion with something going before it, by which it forms part of the plan of Providence, and, although known to us only when it comes into existence, was certain from the beginning, and was known as certain to Him in whose mind the whole plan originated.

These general principles, which constitute the foundation of the Calvinistic system, are equally applicable to the events of the natural and the moral world. The various changes upon matter, which are the events of the natural world, arise from a succession of operations, every one of which, being the effect of something previous, becomes in its turn the cause of something that follows. The particular determinations of mind, which may be considered as events arising in the moral world, have their causes also which we are accustomed to call motives, that is, inducements to act in a particular manner, which arise from the objects presented to the mind, and the views of those objects which the mind entertains. The causes of the events in the natural world are efficient causes, which act upon matter; the causes of events in the moral world are final causes, with reference to which the mind, in which the action originates, proceeds, volun-

tarily and deliberately, to put forth its own powers. But the direction of the action towards its final cause is not less certain than the direction of the motion produced in an inert passive substance, by the force impressed upon it, which is the efficient cause of the motion. While I continue to view an object in a particular light, its influence upon my conduct continues. While I propose to myself a certain end, and perceive that certain means are necessary to attain that end, I employ those means. If I propose other ends, or change my opinion as to the means, there will be a consequent change in my conduct.

Although the determinations of mind thus admit of certainty, by means of their connexion with final causes, this certainty is essentially different from absolute necessity. A thing is said to be necessary, when its opposite implies a contradiction. The three angles of a triangle must be equal to two right angles. Absolute necessity, therefore, excludes the possibility of choice, because, when of two things one must be, and the other cannot be, there is no room for preferring the one to the other. But two opposite determinations of mind are equally possible; both being contingent, either the one or the other may be; and the certainty that one of them shall be, is only what is called moral necessity, which is in truth no necessity at all; because it arises not from the impossibility of the other determination, but merely from the sufficiency of the causes that are employed to produce the effect. The word effect implies, in every case, the previous existence of causes sufficient for its production. It appears, because they are sufficient; so that their sufficiency involves the certainty of its appearing. In every determination that is finally taken, there was this sufficiency of causes; and, consequently, before it was taken, there was a certainty that it would be such as it is. Yet, in all its determinations, the mind acts according to its nature, deliberates, judges, chooses, without any feeling of restraint, but with a full impression that it is exerting its own powers.

If the determinations of moral agents are thus certainly directed by motives, it is plain that the Almighty, whose will gave existence to the universe, and by whose pleasure every cause operates and every effect is produced, gives their origin to these determinations, by the execution of the great plan of his providence. For as there entered into his plan all those efficient causes whose successive operation produces the motions and changes of the material world, so there are brought forward, in succession, by the execution of this plan, all those objects which present themselves to the mind as final causes. Could we suppose a being, who, without any influence in ordering the connexion of things, foresaw, from the beginning, what that connexion would be, and had a mind capable of comprehending the whole series, he would, at the same time, foresee all the exertions of mind in reference to final causes. And if the being who possesses this foresight is no other than the Almighty, upon whose will the whole disposition of the events that are connected together, depends, it is plain that, by altering this disposition, he would alter those exertions of mind which it calls forth, and, therefore, that all the exertions which are actually made constitute a part of his plan. But this does not, in the smallest degree, diminish what we call the liberty of moral agents. For final causes operate upon them according to their nature, in the same

manner as if there were no such foresight and pre-ordination : they shun what is evil ; they desire what is good ; they are directed in their determinations by the light in which objects appear to them, without inquiring—without being impressed at the time of the direction with any desire to know—whether the good and evil came from the appointment of a wise being, or whether it arose fortuitously. It is present, and it operates because it is present, not because it was foreseen. The mind feels its influence ; and this feeling is totally distinct from the calm judgment which the mind may, upon reflection, form with regard to the origin of that influence.

It seems to result from the simple view we have taken of the subject, that the operation of motives will be uniform ; that, as the strength of the motive may in every case be estimated, the effect will appear to correspond to its cause ; and that there will be as little variety in the determinations of different minds, to whom the same final cause is presented, as in the motions of bodies which receive the same foreign impulse. Yet the fact is, that motives are very far from operating according to their apparent strength ; that men are daily acting in contradiction to those moral inducements which, in all reason, ought to determine their conduct ; and that the same motives, by which the determinations of one man are guided, have not an abiding influence, and often hardly any perceptible influence upon another man to whom they appear to be equally present. In some men, the understanding does not separate readily between truth and falsehood, or possesses in so slender a degree the faculty of comprehending the parts of a complex object, and of tracing consequences, that, in most cases, neither the end nor the means appear to them such as they really are. In other men, whose understanding is not defective, there are particular affections and inferior appetites, which either insensibly bias the will, and even pervert the understanding, or whose violence dictates a choice opposite to that which should result from the calm judgment of the understanding. And in many men there is an indecision—a want of vigour—an apprehension of difficulties, by which the final determinations of their minds, and the conduct which they pursue in life, are very different from what they themselves approve.

However plausible, then, the theory may be, which represents motives as final causes calling forth the exertions of mind, yet, when we come to apply this theory to fact, the real influence of these causes becomes a matter of very complicated calculation. We have to consider the strength of the motives not abstractedly, but in conjunction with the particular views formed by the mind to which they are presented ; and there enters into the formation of these views such a variety of circumstances respecting the state of the mind, generally unknown to observers, or inexplicable by them, and often unperceived by the mind itself, that the final determination appears in many cases nearly as wayward and capricious as if it was not connected with any thing previous, but the mind did really exert that uncontrolled sovereignty over its own determinations, to which the Arminians give the name of the self-determining power.

Notwithstanding this complication of circumstances that require to be considered in estimating the influence of motives, it is a matter of

frequent experience, that we may be so well acquainted with the character of a person's mind, with all the springs of action by which he is moved, and with the situation in which he is placed, as to judge, with very little danger of mistake, what line of conduct he will pursue. And it is possible, by the information and suggestions that are conveyed to his understanding, and by a skilful and continued application of the objects best fitted for rousing his passions, and interesting his affections, to obtain an entire ascendancy over his mind, and to command his sentiments and purposes. Many persons find it for their interest or their pleasure to study the art of leading the minds of others, and to devote themselves to the practice of this art; and the history of the world is full of instances in which the art has been successful. The success has sometimes proved hurtful to the civil and political liberties of mankind; but it has never been considered as impairing that liberty of which we are now speaking—the liberty which is necessary to constitute the persons thus led, moral agents. Their determinations, although foreseen by their sagacious neighbours before they were formed,—although formed upon the view of objects not sought after by themselves, but put in their way by those neighbours, were still their own determinations; the spontaneous result of their own active powers, in which they had all the feeling of choice, and liberty, and mental exertion; of self-approbation if they chose right; of self-reproach if they chose wrong.

Although the investigation of the character of others be to us laborious, and full of mistake; although our efforts to direct the minds of others be often rendered abortive by some oversight and negligence on our part, by some change upon theirs, or by some unlooked-for event, we can easily account for this imperfection by the present state of human nature; and we do not find it difficult to rise, from what we ourselves experience, to the conception of that intuitive knowledge, and that entire direction of the determinations of mind, which belong to the Supreme Being. He who formed the human heart knows what is in man: he knows our thoughts afar off, long before they arise in our breasts—long before the objects by which they are to be excited have been presented to us. He, who is intimately present through his whole creation, marks, without fatigue, or the possibility of misapprehension, every the minutest shade that distinguishes the character of one man from that of another: every difference in their situation, every variety in the views which they form of the same objects. And all these things are known to him not merely as they arise. They originated in that plan which from the beginning, was formed in the Divine Mind, and which was executed in time by his pleasure; so that their being future, or present, or past, does not make the smallest difference in the clearness, the facility, and the certainty, with which he knows them.

If all the circumstances presented to the minds of his creatures, and constituting moral inducements to a certain line of conduct, are a part of the plan of the Almighty, it is in his power to accommodate these circumstances to the varieties which he perceives in the characters of mankind, so as to lead them certainly in the path which he chooses for them. We observe, in the history of the human race, what we

call a national character, formed by that concurrence of natural and moral causes, which every sound theist ascribes to the providence of Him who is Governor among the nations. We observe, in private life, how much the characters of those with whom we have intercourse depend upon their education, their society, their employments, and the events which befall them; and we can conceive these and other circumstances combined in the lot of an individual by the disposition of Heaven, so as to have a most commanding influence in eradicating from his breast the vices which were natural to him, and in calling forth the continued and vigorous exercise of every virtuous principle. This influence is the meaning of an expression in theological books, *gratia congrua*, that is, grace exercised in congruity to the disposition of him who is the subject of it, accommodating circumstances to his character in that manner which the Almighty foresees will prove effectual for the purpose of leading him to faith and repentance. This is the account which some writers of the Church of Rome, of great eminence in their day, chose to give of the efficacy of divine grace; it was probably included in the expression used by Arminius, that the means of grace are administered *juxta sapientiam*; and it seems to have been adopted by the earliest followers of Arminius. The account of the efficacy of divine grace, which may be shortly expressed by the phrase *gratia congrua*, proceeds upon the view that has been given of the influence of motives; and to all who admit that the influence of motives upon the mind may certainly direct the conduct, this account cannot appear inconsistent with the principles of human nature. But it was rejected by the successors of Arminius, in their confessions of faith, as inconsistent with an intention to save all men, and as implying a precise and absolute intention of saving some, effectually carried into execution by the congruity of the grace which is administered unto them. It is rejected by the modern Arminians as inconsistent with what they call the self-determining power of the mind: and it is considered by the Calvinists as liable to objections, and as insufficient of itself to produce the effects ascribed to it. *Gratia congrua* appears to the Calvinists to imply an exercise of *scientia media*; because it implies that the minds of those who are to be saved, are considered as having an existence, and as possessing a determinate character, independently of the divine decree, and that the administration of the means of grace is directed by a reference to that character. It appears to the Calvinists to be contradicted, as far as we can judge, by fact. For as the most favourable circumstances did not conduct the Jews, among whom our Saviour lived, to faith in the true Messiah, or preserve Judas, a member of his family, from the blackest guilt, while many among the heathen, without any preparation, were turned, at the first sound of the gospel, from idols, to serve the living God; so, in every age, the concurrence of all the advantages, which education and opportunities can afford, proves ineffectual in regard to some; while others, with the scantiest means of improvement, attain the character of those who shall be saved. *Gratia congrua* appears further to the Calvinists not to come up to the import of those expressions, by which the Scripture describes the operation of the grace of

God upon the soul, nor to imply a remedy suited to that degree of corruption in human nature, which they think may be fairly inferred both from experience and from Scripture.

For all these reasons, the Calvinists consider the efficacy of divine grace as consisting in an immediate action of the Spirit of God upon the soul. This part of their doctrine may be easily represented in such a light, as if it were subversive of the nature of a moral agent; and much occasion has been given for such representations by the unguarded expressions of those who wish to magnify the divine power displayed in this action. But as it is of more importance to know how the doctrine may be stated in consistency with those fundamental principles which cannot be renounced, than how it has been misstated, I shall not dilate on the exaggerations either of its friends or of its adversaries, but simply present such a view of it as appears to me perfectly agreeable both to the words of our Confession of Faith, and to the account which has been given of the liberty of a moral agent.

It is manifest that the uncertainty in the operation of motives, which was formerly mentioned, arises from the corruption of human nature; in other words, from the defects of the understanding and the disorders of the heart. If the understanding always perceived things as they are, and if the affections were so balanced in the soul, as never to dictate any choice in opposition to that which appears to be best, there would be an uniformity in the purposes and the conduct of all to whom the same motives are presented. But if, according to the descriptions which the Calvinists find in Scripture, and which they adopt as the foundation of their system, the corruption of human nature be such as to blind the understanding, and to give inferior appetites that dominion in the soul which was originally assigned to reason and conscience, all the multiplicity of error, and all the caprice of ungoverned desire, come in to give variety and uncertainty to the choice of the mind. The only method of removing this uncertainty of choice is by removing the corruption from which it proceeds. And this is allowed, by all who hold that there is such a corruption, to be the work, not of the creature who is corrupt, but of the Creator. This work is expressed in Scripture by such phrases as the following: "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."*—"Ye must be born again;†—"renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created you;‡—"renewed in the spirit of your minds—created unto good works."§ While the Calvinists infer from these expressions, that there is an immediate action of God upon the souls of those who are saved, they observe, that all these expressions are so very far from implying any action subversive of the nature of man, that they distinctly mark the restoration of the understanding, the affections, and all the principles of the human mind, to the state in which they were, before they were corrupted. Although the Calvinists do not attempt to explain the manner of this action, they say it cannot appear strange to any sound theist, —to any one who believes in God as the Father of spirits, that he

* Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

† John iii. 7.

‡ Col. iii. 10.

§ Eph. iv. 23; ii. 10.

has it in his power to restore to their original integrity those faculties which he at first bestowed, and which are continually preserved in exercise by his visitation : and they place that efficacy of divine grace which is characteristic of their system in this renovation of the mind, conjoined with the exhibition of such moral inducements, as are fitted to call forth the exertions of a mind acting according to reason. It appears to them indispensably necessary that these two, the renovation of the mind and the exhibition of moral inducements, should go together. For although it is of the nature of mind to be called forth to action by motives, yet the strongest motives may be presented in vain to a mind which is vitiated, and moral suasion may be insufficient to correct its heedlessness and to overcome its depravity ; so that if the grace of God consisted merely in the exhibition of motives, or in a counsel of the same kind with that which a friend administers, it might be exerted without effect, and those whom God intended to lead to salvation might remain under the power of sin. But when, to the exhibition of the strongest motives, is joined that influence which, by renewing the faculties of the mind, disposes it to attend to them, the effect, according to the laws by which mind operates, is infallible ; and the Being who is capable of exerting that influence, and who, in the decree which embraces the whole system of the universe, arranged all the moral inducements that are to be exhibited in succession to his reasonable creatures, has entire dominion over their wills, and conducts them, agreeably to the laws of their nature, freely, *i. e.* with their consent and choice, and without the feeling of constraint, yet certainly, to the end which he proposes. This grace is irresistible, because all the principles which oppose its operation are subdued, and the will is inclined to follow the judgment of the understanding. What before was *arbitrium servum*, according to a language formerly used upon this subject, becomes *arbitrium liberum* ; for the soul is rescued from a condition in which it was hurried on by appetite to act without due deliberation upon false views of objects, and it recovers the faculty of discerning, and the faculty of obeying the truth. But in the exercise of these faculties consists what the Scriptures call “the glorious liberty of the children of God,” the liberty of a moral agent. He is a slave, the servant of sin, led captive by his lusts, when the derangement of his nature prevents him from seeing things as they are, from pursuing what deserves his choice, from avoiding what he ought to shun. He is free, when he deliberates, and judges, and acts according to the laws of his nature. By this freedom he is assimilated to higher orders of being, who uniformly choose what is good. God acts always according to the highest reason ; he cannot but be just and good : yet in this moral necessity, which is inseparable from the idea of a perfect being, there is freedom of choice. The man Christ Jesus was uniformly and infallibly determined to do those things which pleased his Father : yet he acted with the most entire freedom. “The spirits of just men made perfect are unalterably disposed to fulfil the commandments of the Most High ; yet none will suppose that, when they are advanced to the perfection of their nature, they have lost what is essential to the character of a moral agent. So to man in a state of trial, according to the degree in which his will is determined by the grace of God

to the choice of what is good, to the same degree is the freedom of his nature restored. If the corruption of his nature, which indisposes him for that choice, were completely removed, he would always will and do what is good. If some remainders of that corruption are allowed to continue, there will be a proportional danger of his deviating from the right path. But the degree may be so small, that he shall be effectually preserved from being at any time under the bondage of sin, and in the general course of his life, shall be determined by those motives which the gospel exhibits.

These are the principles upon which the Calvinists are best able to defend their system against the objection, that it is subversive of the nature of man. They hold, that in the exercise of that faith and repentance which are indispensably necessary to salvation, the determination to act arises from the influence of God upon the soul; but that it is a determination to act according to the nature of the soul, and therefore, that although the effect of the determination is certain, the action continues to be free. The Arminians themselves allow that contingent events, such as the volitions and exertions of free agents, are certain beforehand; for they admit that the foreknowledge of God extends to them. It is not, therefore, the bare certainty of the event which can appear to them inconsistent with liberty: and if the cause to which the Calvinists ascribe this certainty gives to the mind the full possession and exercise of its faculties, there is implied in the certainty of the event, not the destruction, but the improvement of the liberty of man.

SECTION IV.

THE second head, to which all the difficulties that have been supposed to adhere to the Calvinistic system may be reduced, is this: It is conceived to be dishonourable to God, and inconsistent with those attributes of his nature, of which we are able to form the clearest notions. The amount of the difficulties ^{else} ~~of~~ belong to this second head may be thus shortly stated.

Allowing that the determining grace of God may, without destroying the nature of man, effectually lead to eternal life those to whom it is given, yet the bestowing such a favour upon some and not upon others, when all stood equally in need of it, constitutes a distinction amongst the creatures of God, which it appears impossible to reconcile with the impartiality of their common Father. It is true that many of his children receive a smaller portion in this life than others: but the unequal distribution of earthly comforts is subservient to the welfare of society, and calls forth the exercise of many virtues: for while those who receive much, have opportunities of doing good, those who receive little, are placed in a situation which is often very favourable to their moral character; and all are encouraged to look forward to a time, when the present inequalities shall be removed. But the withholding from some that grace, which is supposed to be essential to the formation of their moral character, can never be compensated. It leaves them sinful and wretched here, and consigns

them to the abodes of misery hereafter ; whilst others, not originally superior to them, are conducted, by the grace with which they are distinguished, through the practice of virtue upon earth, to its highest rewards in heaven. The Almighty appears, according to this system, not only partial, but also chargeable with all the sin that remains in the world, by withholding the grace which would have removed it ; he appears unjust in punishing those transgressions which he does not furnish men with effectual means of avoiding ; and there seems to be a want of sincerity in the various expressions of his earnest desire that men should abstain from sin, in the reproaches for their not abstaining from it, and in the expostulations upon account of their obstinacy, with which the Scriptures abound, when he had determined beforehand to withhold from many that grace which he might have bestowed upon all, and without which he knows that every man must continue in sin.

The picture which I have drawn easily admits of very high colouring, such as may be found in Whitby's Discourses on the Five Points. Even in the simple exhibition of it now given, it appears to contain objections and difficulties of a very serious nature : and if these objections and difficulties fairly result from the Calvinistic system, if they are peculiar to that system, and if they do not admit of an answer, they are a clear proof that it does not contain a true representation of the extent and the application of the remedy. For it is impossible that any doctrine, inconsistent with the attributes of God, is contained in a divine revelation. But we may find, upon an attentive examination of the picture now drawn, that for the solution of some of the difficulties nothing more is necessary than a fair statement of the case ; that some belong to the Arminian system no less than to the Calvinistic ; and that others are to be placed to the account of the narrowness of our understandings, which, in following out principles that appear unquestionably true, meet upon all subjects with points which they are unable to explain.

When the Calvinists are accused of charging God with partiality, because they say that the effectual determining grace, which is imparted to some and withheld from others, proceeds from the mere good pleasure of God, they pretend to give no other answer than this ; that the Almighty is not accountable to any for the manner in which he dispenses his favours ; and that, although the favour conferred upon the elect is infinitely superior to all the bounties of Providence, a favour which fixes their moral character and their everlasting condition, still it is a favour which originates entirely in the good pleasure of Him by whom it is bestowed, and in the communication of which there is no room for the rules of distributive justice, but it is lawful for the Creator to do what he will with his own. Justice is exercised, after men have acted their parts, in giving to every one according to his deserts ; and then all respect of persons, any kind of preference, which is not founded upon the superior worthiness of the objects preferred, is repugnant to our moral feelings, and inconsistent with our conceptions of the Supreme Ruler. But the case is widely different with regard to the communication of that effectual grace, which is the fruit of election. For according to the view of the divine foreknowledge, which is essential to the Calvinistic system, all things are

brought into being by the execution of the divine decree, so that no circumstance in the manner of the existence of any individual can depend upon the conduct of that individual, but all that distinguishes him from others must originate in the mind which formed the decree : and according to the view of the moral condition of the posterity of Adam, upon which the Calvinistic system proceeds, all deserved to suffer, so that the grace, by which any are saved from suffering, is to be ascribed to the compassion of the Almighty, *i. e.* to an exercise of goodness, which it is impossible for any to claim as a right.

But the Arminians do not rest in accusing the Calvinists of charging God with partiality : they represent absolute reprobation as imposing upon men a necessity of sinning, from whence it follows that there is not only an unequal distribution of favours according to the Calvinistic system, but that there is also gross injustice in punishing any sins which are committed. All Arminian books are filled with references to human life, with similes, and with repetitions of the same argument in various forms, by which it is intended to impress upon the minds of their readers this idea, that as we cannot, without glaring iniquity, first take away from man the power of obeying a command, and then punish his disobedience, so if we adhere to those clear notions of the moral character of the Deity, which reason and Scripture teach, we must renounce a system, which implies that men suffer everlasting misery for those sins, which God made it impossible for them to avoid. To this kind of reasoning the Calvinists answer, that, under all the amplification which it has often received, there is concealed a fallacy in the statement which totally enervates the objection : and the alleged fallacy is thus explained by them. If the decree of reprobation implied any influence exerted by God upon the mind leading men to sin, the consequences charged upon it would clearly follow. But that decree is nothing more than the withholding from some the grace which is imparted to others ; and God concurs in the sins committed by those from whom the grace is withheld, only by that general concurrence which is necessary to the preservation of his creatures. He, in whom they “live and move and have their being,” continues with them the exercise of their powers : but the particular direction of that exercise, which renders their actions sinful, arises from the perverseness of their own will, and is the fruit of their own deliberation. They feel that they might have acted otherwise : they blame themselves, because when it was in their power to have avoided sin they did not avoid it ; and thus they carry about with them, in the sentiments and the reproaches of their own minds, a decisive proof, which sophistry can never overpower, that there was no external cause compelling them to sin. It is admitted by the Calvinists that all, from whom the special grace of God is withheld, shall infallibly continue under the dominion of sin, because their doctrine with regard to the grace of God proceeds upon that corruption of human nature, which this grace alone is able to remove. But they hold that, although of two events one is certainly future, both may be equally possible in this sense, that neither implies a contradiction : and this is all that appears to them necessary to vindicate their doctrine from the charge of implying that men are compelled to sin. The Arminians are not entitled to require more, because

by admitting that the sins of men are foreknown by God, they admit that they are certain, and yet they do not consider this certainty of the event as infringing the liberty of those, by whose agency the event is accomplished. When it is said, then, that man by the decree of reprobation is put under a necessity of sinning, there is an equivocation in the expression. Those who wish to fix a reproach upon the Calvinistic system, mean by a necessity of sinning, that co-action, that foreign impulse, which destroys liberty : those who defend this system admit of a necessity of sinning in no other sense, than as that expression may be employed to denote merely the certainty of sinning which arises from the state of the mind ; and they have recourse to a distinction, formerly explained, between that physical necessity of sinning, which frees from all blame, and that moral necessity of sinning, which implies the highest degree of blame. This distinction is supported by the sentiments of human nature ; it is the foundation of judgments, which we are accustomed daily to pronounce, with regard to the conduct of our neighbours ; and, when rightly understood and applied, it removes from the Calvinistic doctrine the odious imputations of representing men as punished by God for what he compels them to do.

Still, however, a cloud hangs over the subject ; and there is a difficulty in reconciling the mind to a system, which after laying this foundation, that special grace is necessary to the production of human virtue, adopts as its distinguishing tenet this position, that that grace is denied to many. The objection may be inaccurately stated by the adversaries of the system : there may be exaggeration and much false colouring in what they say : it may be true that God is not the promoter or instigator of sin ; that the evil propensities of our nature, with which we ourselves are chargeable, lead us astray, and that every person who follows these propensities, in opposition to the dictates of reason and conscience, deserves to suffer. But after all, it must be admitted, upon the Calvinistic system, that God might have prevented this deviation and this suffering ; that as no dire necessity restrains the Almighty from communicating any measure of grace to any number of his creatures, the unmerited favour which is shown to some might have been shown to others also ; and therefore that all the variety of transgression, and the consequent misery of his creatures may be traced back to his unequal distribution of that grace, which he was not bound to impart to any, but which, although he might have imparted it to all, he chose to give only to some.

This appears to me the fair amount of the objection against the Calvinistic system, drawn from its apparent inconsistency with some of the moral attributes of the Deity. The objection is stated in terms more moderate than are commonly to be found in Arminian books : but it is in reality the stronger for not being exaggerated.

When this objection is calmly examined, without a predilection for any particular system of theology, it will be found resolvable into that question, which has exercised the mind of man ever since he began to speculate, how was moral evil introduced, and how is it permitted to exist under the government of a Being, whose wisdom, and power, and goodness are without bounds ? The existence of moral evil is a fact independent of all the systems of philosophy or theology which

are employed to account for it. It has been the complaint of all ages, that many of the rational creatures of God abuse the freedom which is essential to their character as moral and accountable agents, debase their nature, and pursue a line of conduct which is destructive of their own happiness and hurtful to their neighbour. And it is agreeable to both reason and Scripture to believe, that the depravity and misery which are beheld upon earth are the introduction to a state of more complete degradation and more unabated wretchedness hereafter. And thus, as it is no objection to the truth of the Gospel, that there is moral evil in the world, because it existed before the Gospel was given, so the difficulty of accounting for its existence is not to be charged to the account of any particular system of theology, because its existence is the great problem, to the solution of which the faculties of man have ever been unequal. Although, notwithstanding that difficulty, the proofs of the being, the perfections, and the government of God appear to those who understand the principles of natural religion sufficient to remove every reasonable doubt, the difficulty still remains; and a sound theist believes that God is good, without being able to explain why there is evil in the world which he created.

A short review of the attempts that were made in ancient times to solve this problem, may prepare you for understanding the force of the answer given by the Calvinists to that objection against their system which we are now considering.

Some philosophers, who held the pre-existence of souls, said that man in this state expiates by suffering, the sins which he committed in a former state, and recovers by a gradual purification the perfection of his nature which he had lost. But, besides that this was assuming as true, a position of which there is no evidence, that man existed in a previous state, the position, supposing it to be true, is of none avail, because it merely shifts the difficulty from the state which we behold, to a previous state which was equally under the government of God. It was the fundamental doctrine of the oriental philosophy, that there are two opposite principles in nature, the one good, the other evil. The good principle is limited and counteracted in his desire to communicate happiness by the evil principle; and, from the opposition between the two, there arises not such a world as the good would have produced, but a world in which virtue and vice, happiness and misery, are blended together. But as the good principle is more powerful than the evil, he will at length prevail; so that the final result of the present strife will be the defeat of the evil principle, and the undisturbed felicity of those that have been virtuous.

All the sects of Gnostics, which distracted the early ages of the Christian church, adopted some modification of this doctrine, and were distinguished from one another only by the rank which they assigned to the evil spirit, by the manner in which they traced his generation, or the period which they assigned to his fall.* The fame

* Mosheim's Church History, vol. i. The learned author has with much erudition, discriminated the different sects. But he has entered more minutely into this discrimination than is consistent with the patience of his readers, or than can serve any good purpose. For it is a matter of very little importance in what manner writers, whose names are deservedly forgotten, arranged the rank and the subordination of those beings, to whom their imagination gave existence.

of Manes eclipsed all the other founders of the Gnostic sects ; and his doctrine, which was once diffused over a great part of the Christian world, is still familiar to every scholar under the name of Manicheism. Manes made the evil principle, which he called *μά*, *matter*, co-eternal with the Supreme Being. To the power of this principle, independent of God, and acting in opposition to him, Manes ascribed all the evil that now is, and that will for ever continue to exist in the world. He considered the sins of men as proceeding from the suggestions and impulse of this spirit ; and the corruption of human nature as consisting in this, that besides the rational soul, which is an emanation from the Supreme Being who is light, the body is inhabited and actuated by a depraved mind which originates from the evil principle and retains the character of its author. This was the system by which Manes, treading in the steps of many who went before him, and studying to improve upon their defects, attempted to account for the existence of moral evil. But as this system, in order to preserve the honour of the moral attributes of the Deity, admits such limitations of his power as are inconsistent with the independence and sovereignty of the Lord of nature, it must be renounced by all who entertain those exalted conceptions of the divine majesty which are agreeable to reason, and illustrated by Scripture, or who pay due attention to the revelation given in Scripture, of those evil spirits who oppose the purposes of divine grace. We believe that the Almighty was before all things ; that every thing which is, derived its existence, its form, and its powers from his will ; that his councils are independent of every other being ; that the strength of his creatures, all of whom are his servants, cannot for a moment counteract the working of his arm, and that the world is what he willed it to be. We learn from Scripture that there are higher orders of being, not the objects of our senses, who are the creatures of God, and of whom an innumerable company run to fulfil his pleasure. We learn that some of these beings, by disobeying their Creator, forfeited the state in which he first placed them ; that their depravity is accompanied with a desire to corrupt others ; that one of them was the tempter of our first parents, and that he still continues to exert an influence over the minds of their posterity, by enticing them to sin. But the Scriptures guard us against supposing that this evil spirit is rendered by his apostacy independent of the Supreme Being. For by many striking expressions in the ancient books, and by the whole series of facts and declarations in the New Testament, we are led to consider him as entirely under the command and control of the Creator, permitted to exert a certain degree of influence for a season, but restrained and counteracted during that season, by a power infinitely superior to his own, till the time arrive when he is to be bound in everlasting chains, and his works destroyed.

It appears, then, that the account of the origin of evil, which is characteristic of the Manichean system, does not receive any degree of countenance from that revelation of the invisible world which the Scriptures give. There is indeed mentioned in various parts of Scripture, incidentally and with much obscurity, a connection between us and other parts of the universe,—an influence exerted over the hu-

man race by beings far removed from our observation, who are the creatures and the subjects of Him who made us. The spirits who stand before the Almighty are sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation; and the spirits who rebelled against him seek to involve us in the guilt and the misery of their rebellion. This incidental opening suggests to our minds a conception of the unity of the great moral system, of the mutual subserviency of its parts, and of the multiplicity of those relations by which the parts are bound together; a conception somewhat analogous to those ideas of reciprocal action in the immense bodies of the natural system, upon which the received principles of astronomy proceed, and which the progress of modern discoveries has very much confirmed. Our faculties are not adequate to the full comprehension of such connexions, either in the natural or in the moral world. But the hints which are given may teach us humility, by showing how much remains to be known: they may enlarge and elevate our ideas of the magnificence and order of the work of God; and they conspire in imprinting on our minds this first lesson of religion, that every part of that work is his, that the superintendence and control of the Supreme Mind extends throughout the whole, and that we give a false account of every phenomenon either in the natural or in the moral world, when we withdraw it from the all-ruling providence of Him, without whose permission nothing can be, and whose energy pervades all the exertions of his creatures.

If we say that moral evil exists in the world, because, by the constitution under which we live, the effects of the disobedience of our first parents are transmitted to their posterity, we explain, agreeably to the information afforded in Scripture, the manner in which sin was introduced, but we do not account for its introduction; for that constitution, to which we ascribe its continuance in the world, was established by God; and after we have been made to ascend this step, we are left just where we were, to inquire why the Almighty not only permitted moral evil to enter, but established a constitution by which it is propagated. If we attempt, as has often been done, to account for moral evil by the necessary limitation in the capacities of all created beings, we are in danger of returning to the principles of the Gnostics, who ascribed an essential pravity to matter, which not even the power of the Almighty can subdue. If we say that moral evil is subservient to the good of the universe, we seem to be warranted by many analogies in the structure and operations of our own frame, where pain is a preparative for pleasure,—in the appearances of the earth, and the vicissitudes to which it is subject, where irregularity and deformity contribute to the beauty and preservation of the whole,—in society, where permanent and universal good often arises out of partial and temporary evil. Such analogies have often been observed, and they constitute both a delightful and an useful part of natural history:* but when we attempt to apply them to the system of the universe, as an account of that evil which has been, and which always will be, which affects the character as well as the happiness of rational agents, and excludes them from the hope of recovering that rank which they had lost, we find that we have go-

* Paley's Natural Theology. Goodness of the Deity.

beyond our depth. The idea may be just, but we are bewildered in the inferences which we presume to draw from it : although we perceive numberless instances in which partial good arises out of partial evil, yet we are unable to explain what is the subserviency to good in the whole system of that evil which is permanent ; and after being pressed with difficulties on every side, we are obliged to confess our ignorance of the extent and the relations of the great subject concerning which we speculate.

Having seen the insufficiency of the various attempts made in ancient and modern times, to solve the great problem of natural religion, it only remains for us to rest in those fundamental principles of which we have sufficient evidence. We know that God is wise and good, and that as nothing in the universe has power to defeat or counteract his purposes, all things that are, entered into the great plan which he formed from the beginning. Hence we infer that the universe, understanding by that word the whole series of causes and effects, and the whole succession of created beings, is, such as we behold it, the work of God. Why it is not more perfect we know not. But from the single fact that it is, we infer that it answers the purposes of the Creator. He did not choose it on account of its imperfections : but these imperfections were not hidden from his view, nor are they independent of his will ; and he chose it out of all the possible worlds which he might have made, because, with all its imperfections, it promotes the end for which it was made. That end, being such as God proposed, must be good ; and the world, being the fittest to promote that end, must, notwithstanding its imperfections, be such as it was worthy of God to produce.

It does not appear to me that human reason can go farther upon this subject. I am sensible that this is a method of accounting for the existence of evil, not very flattering to the pride of our understandings, and not much fitted to afford a solution of those difficulties which exercise our curiosity. It is deducing a vindication of what is done, not from our reasonings and views, but from the fact that it is done. But to this kind of vindication we are obliged perpetually to have recourse in all parts both of natural and of revealed religion ; and to those who consider it unsatisfying I can give no better counsel than to read and ponder Bishop Butler's *Analogy*, which, of all the books that ever were written by men, is the best calculated to check the extravagance of our shallow speculations concerning the government of God.

When I stated the objection to the Calvinistic system, that it is inconsistent with the goodness of God, the objection appeared to be resolvable into the question concerning the origin of evil ; and now that we have attained the philosophical answer to that question, we find ourselves brought back to the principles of Calvinism. It was objected to the Calvinistic system that if God withholds from some, the special grace which would have led them to repentance, their sin and misery may be traced back to him. But we have seen that all the moral evil in the world may in like manner be traced back to God, because the great plan, of which that moral evil is a part, originated from his counsel ; so that the answer to this objection

against Calvinism is precisely the same with the philosophical answer to the question concerning moral evil. It is seen that some do not repent and believe; but their conduct, like every other event in the universe, was comprehended in the divine plan; in other words, because God has not conferred upon them that grace which would have led them to pursue a different conduct, we infer that it was not his original purpose to confer that grace, and we believe that the purpose is good because it is his.

The Arminians are compelled to have recourse to the very same answer, although they attempt, by their system, to shift it for a little. They say that men do not repent and believe, because they resist that grace which might have led them to repentance and faith. But why do they resist this grace? The Arminians answer, that the resistance arises from the self-determining power of the mind. But why does one mind determine itself to submit to this grace and another to resist it? If the Arminians exclude the infallible operation of every foreign cause, they must answer this question by ascribing the difference to the different character of the minds; and then one question more brings them to God, the Father of spirits. For if these different characters of mind be supposed to have existed independently of the divine will, a sufficient account is indeed given why some are predestinated and others are reprobated; but it is an account which withdraws the everlasting condition of his reasonable offspring from the disposal of the Supreme Being: whereas if it be admitted that he who made them gave to their minds the qualities by which they are distinguished, and ordained all the circumstances of their lot which conspire in forming their moral character, the resistance given by some is referred to his appointment. It appears to be an incontrovertible truth, a truth the evidence of which is implied in the terms in which it is enunciated, that the gifts of nature and the gifts of grace proceed equally from the good pleasure of him who bestows them: and if this fundamental proposition be granted, then the Calvinistic and Arminian systems lead ultimately to the same conclusion. The Arminians ascribe the faith and good works of some to a predisposition in their own minds for receiving the means which God has provided for all, and to the favourable circumstances which cherish this disposition; and the impenitence and unbelief of others to the obstinacy of their hearts, and to a concurrence of circumstances by which that obstinacy is prevented from yielding to the means of improvement. The Calvinists ascribe the faith and good works of some to an immediate and supernatural operation of the Spirit of God upon their souls, by which the means of improvement are rendered effectual; and the impenitence and unbelief of others to that withholding of the grace of God, by which the most favourable situation becomes ineffectual for leading them to eternal life. In either case that God, who forms the heart and who orders the lot of all his creatures, executes his purpose; and although the steps be somewhat different in the two systems, yet, according to both, the *ultima ratio*, the true reason why some are saved and others are not, is the good pleasure of Him who, by a different dispensation of the gifts of nature and of grace, might have saved all.

What the ends are which God proposed to himself, by saving some

instead of saving all, we are totally unqualified to explain. Agreeably to the expression used in our Confession of Faith,* the Calvinists are accustomed to say that the great end of the whole system is the glory of God, or the illustration of his attributes; that as he displayed his mercy by saving some from that guilt and misery in which all were involved, so he displays his justice by punishing others for that sin, in which, according to his sovereign pleasure, he chose to leave them. Arminian writers are accustomed to reprobate, with much indignation, an expression which appears to them to represent the glory of God as a separate end, pursued by him for his own pleasure, without any consideration of the happiness of his creatures, or any attention to their ideas of justice. But, bearing in mind the whole character of the Deity, considering that He, who may do what he will, being infinitely wise and good, can do nothing but what is right, it is obvious that his glory is inseparably connected with the happiness of his creatures. What the weakness of our understanding leads us to call different parts of a character, are united with the most indissoluble harmony in the divine mind; and his works, which illustrate his attributes, do not display any one of them in such a manner as to obscure the rest. From this perfect harmony between the wisdom and goodness of God, his creatures may rest assured that every circumstance which concerns their welfare is effectually provided for in that system which he chose to produce; and the whole universe of created intelligence could have chosen nothing for themselves so good, as that which is ordained to be, because it illustrates the glory of the Creator. At the same time, it must be acknowledged, that we do not make any advances in our acquaintance with the ends of the system by adopting this expression. The expression implies that there is a balance or proportion among the different attributes, that the display of one is bounded by the display of another, and that there are certain limits of every particular attribute implied in the perfection of the divine mind. But it leaves us completely ignorant of the nature of those limits, and it does not presume to explain why the justice of God required the condemnation of that precise number who are left to perish, and how his mercy was fully displayed in the salvation of that precise number who are called the elect. We are still left to resolve the discrimination which was made, and the extent of that discrimination, into the good pleasure of God; by which phrase is meant, not the will of a being acting capriciously for his own gratification, but a will determined by the best reasons, although these reasons are beyond our comprehension: and all doubts and objections, which the narrowness of our views might suggest, are lost in that entire confidence, with which the magnificence of his works and the principles of our nature teach us to look up to a Being, of whom, and by whom, and to whom are all things.

It may be thought, upon a superficial view, that the account which has been given of the origin of evil represents sin as not less agreeable to the Almighty than virtue, since both enter into the plan which he ordained, and both are considered as the fulfilment of his purpose.

* Confession of Faith, iii. 3.

This specious and popular objection has often been urged with an air of triumph against the Calvinistic system. But the principles which have been stated furnish an answer to the objection. The evil that is in the universe was not chosen by God upon its own account, but was permitted upon account of its connexion with that good which he chooses. The precise notion of God's permitting evil is this, that his power is not exerted in hindering that from coming into existence, which could not have existed independently of his will, and which is allowed to exist, because, although not in itself an object of his approbation, it results from something else. According to this notion of the permission of evil, we say that although this world, notwithstanding the evil that is in it, promotes the end which the Creator proposed, and carries into effect the purpose which he had in creating it, yet he beholds the good that is in the world with approbation, and the evil with abhorrence. We gather from all the conceptions which we are led to form of the Supreme Being that he cannot love evil: we feel that he has so constituted our minds that we always behold moral evil with indignation in others, with self-reproach in ourselves: we often observe, we sometimes experience the fatal effects which it produces; and we find all the parts of that revelation which the Scriptures contain, conspiring to dissuade us from the practice of it. In this entire coincidence between the deductions of reason, the sentiments of human nature, the influence of conduct upon happiness, and the declarations of the divine word, there is laid such a foundation of morality as no speculations can shake. This coincidence gives that direct and authoritative intimation of the will of our Creator, which was plainly intended to be the rule of our actions: and the assurance of the moral character of his government, which we derive from these sources, is so forcibly conveyed to our understandings and our hearts, that if our reasonings upon theological subjects should ever appear to give the colour of truth to any views that are opposite to this assurance, we may, without hesitation, conclude that these views are false. They have derived their colour of truth from our presuming to carry our researches farther than the limited range of our faculties admits, and from our mistaking those difficulties which are unaccountable to an intelligence so finite as ours, for those contradictions which indicate to every intelligent being the falsehood of the proposition to which they adhere.

These are the general principles, upon which the ablest defenders of the Calvinistic system attempt to vindicate that system from the charge of being inconsistent with the nature of man and the nature of God. As they furnish the answer to philosophical objections, I have stated them, as much as possible, in a philosophical form, with very little reference to the authority of Scripture, and without the use of those technical terms which occur in books of Theology. But it is not proper for us to rest in this form. To afford a complete view of the evidence and of the application of these principles, I mean first to present a comprehensive account of that support which the Calvinistic system derives from Scripture: secondly, to give a general history of Calvinism, of the reception which at different periods it has met with in the Christian church, and of what may be called its present state:—and then to conclude the subject by applying the principles which have been

stated as an answer to the two objections, in a concise discussion of various questions that have agitated the Christian church, and in an explication of various phrases that have been currently used in treating of these questions. The questions turn upon general principles, so that although they have been spread out in great detail, and although they seem to belong to different subjects, all that is necessary in discussing them is to show the manner in which the general principles apply to the particular questions. The general principles will be elucidated by this various application; and we shall be able, after having travelled quickly over so much debateable matter, to mark the consistency with which all the parts of the Calvinistic system arise out of a few leading ideas.

Reid on the Active Powers.

King on the Origin of Evil.

Clarke's Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God.

Whitby on the Five Points.

Locke.

Edwards on Free Will.

Butler's Analogy.

CHAPTER X.

GENERAL VIEW OF THE SUPPORT WHICH SCRIPTURE GIVES TO THE
CALVINISTIC SYSTEM.

THE passages adduced from Scripture by the friends and the adversaries of this system are so numerous, and have received interpretations so widely different, that I should engage in an endless field of controversy, if I attempted to notice particular texts, and to contrast in every instance the Arminian and the Calvinistic exposition of them. But a labour so tedious and fatiguing is really unnecessary, for the same principles, upon which the Calvinistic exposition of one passage proceeds, apply to every other. Instead, therefore, of repeating the same leading ideas with a small variation of form, I shall simply mention that an index of particular texts may be found in the proofs annexed to several chapters of the Confession of Faith, in the quotations that are made in every ordinary system under the several heads which belong to the doctrine of predestination, and in those books which should be read upon the subject. And I shall endeavour to arrange this multifarious matter under the three following heads, which appear to me to constitute the support which Scripture gives to the Calvinistic system. 1. All the actions of men, even those which the Scripture holds forth to our abhorrence, are represented as being comprehended in the great plan of divine providence. 2. The predestination of which the Scripture speaks is ascribed to the good pleasure of God. 3. And the various descriptions of that change of character, by which men are prepared for eternal life, seem intended to magnify the power, and to declare the efficacy of that grace by which it is produced. I shall then state the answers given by the Calvinists to that objection against their system which has been drawn from the commands, the counsels, and the expostulations of Scripture.

SECTION I.

ALL the actions of men, even those which the Scripture holds forth to our abhorrence, are represented as being comprehended in the great plan of divine providence. I do not mean merely that all the actions of men are foreseen by God. Of this the predictions in Scripture afford evidence which even the Arminians admit to be incontro-

vertible. But I mean that the actions of men are foreseen by God not as events independent of his will, but as originating in his determination, and as fulfilling his purpose. By many sublime expressions the Scriptures impress our minds with an idea of the universal sovereignty of God, of the extent and efficacy of his counsel, and of the uncontrolled operation of his power throughout all his dominions. Even those beings and events, that appear to counteract his designs, are represented as subject to his will, as not only at length to be subdued by him, but as promoting, while they operate, the end for which he ordained them.—Psal. lxxvi. 10.—Prov. xvi. 4.—Is. xlv. 7.—Lam. iii. 37, 38. Such expressions receive a striking illustration from many of the histories recorded in Scripture. The barbarity of the brethren of Joseph, which filled their minds with deep remorse, was intended by God as an instrument of providing a settlement for the posterity of Abraham. “As for you,” said Joseph to his brethren, Gen. l. 20, “ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.” God did not merely turn it to good after it happened, but he “meant it unto good.” The obstinacy of Pharaoh, in refusing to let the people go out of that country to which the wickedness of the sons of Jacob had led them, was, in like manner, a part of the plan of divine providence; for, as God said unto Moses, Exod. x. 1, 2, “I have hardened his heart, and the heart of his servants, that I might show these my signs before him; and that thou mayest tell in the ears of thy son, and of thy son’s son, what things I have wrought in Egypt.” “I have hardened his heart,” not by exerting any immediate influence leading him to sin, but by disposing matters in such a manner that he shall not consent; he shall suffer for his obstinacy; but that obstinacy is appointed by me to give an opportunity of exhibiting those signs, which shall transmit the Law of Moses to future ages with unquestionable proofs of its divine original. The folly of the princes, whose territories adjoined to the wilderness, in refusing the children of Israel a free passage when they went out of Egypt, the combination of the kings of Canaan, which brought destruction upon themselves, and the oppression and ravages of those who carried Israel into captivity, are all held forth in the historical and prophetic books of Scripture, as proceeding from the ordination of God. Of Cyrus the good prince, whose edict recalled the Jews from captivity, the Almighty says, Is. xlv. xlv. “He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, thou shalt be built; mine anointed, whose right hand I have holden; whom, for Jacob my servant’s sake, I have called by his name.” But of Nebuchadnezzar also, the destroyer of nations, whose pride is painted in the strongest colours, and whose punishment corresponded to the enormity of his crimes, thus saith the Almighty, Jer. xxvii. 4—8, “I have made the earth, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me: and now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon my servant.” And again, Ezek. xxx. 24, 25, “I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon, and put my sword in his hand,—and he shall stretch it out upon the land of Egypt.”

The infidelity of the Jews who lived in our Saviour’s time, the envy and malice of their rulers, and the injustice and violence with

which an innocent man was condemned to die, were crimes in themselves most atrocious, and are declared in Scripture to have been the cause of that unexampled misery which the Jewish nation suffered. Yet all this is also declared, Acts ii. 23, to have happened, “by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.” And Acts iv. 27, “Both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.” And Peter, after relating the manner in which our Lord was put to death, adds the following words, Acts iii. 18: “Those things which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled;” *i. e.* the purpose of God in delivering the world embraced all the wicked actions of the persecutors of his Son, and could not have been accomplished in the manner which he had foretold without these actions. Hence it came to be necessary that these actions should be performed: and this necessity is intimated as in many other places of Scripture, so particularly Matth. xvi. 21. “Jesus began to show unto his disciples how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day.” In the original, the same verb *δει* governs the infinitives *απελθειν, παθειν, αποσταθηναι, εγερθηναι*; *i. e.* the form of the expression represents his going to Jerusalem, which was an action depending upon his own will, and his suffering many things of the chief priests, which depended upon their will, as being as unalterably fixed, and as having the same necessity of event as his resurrection from the dead, which was accomplished by an exertion of divine power without the intervention of man.

This last example is more particular and more interesting to us than any of the former: but it is exactly of the same order with the rest; and all of them conspire in establishing the following positions:—that actions, contrary to the law of God, and to the principles of morality, may form part of that plan originally fixed and determined in the divine mind;—that these actions do not lose any of their moral turpitude by being so determined, but continue to be the actions of the moral agents by whom they are performed, for which they deserve blame and suffer punishment;—and that actions thus wicked and punishable are made the instrument of great good. When we find these positions true in many particular instances, and also agreeing with general expressions in Scripture, we conclude by fair induction that they may hold true in the great system of the universe; and we seem to be warranted to say, not merely that the providence of God brings good out of evil when the evil happens;—that is allowed by the Socinians who deny the divine foreknowledge;—not merely that God, foreseeing wicked actions which were to be performed, connected them in the plan of his providence with the events which he had determined to produce;—this is what the Arminians say;—but that the Supreme Being, to whom the series of events, of good and of bad actions that constitute the character of this world, was from the beginning present, determined to produce this world; that the bad, no less than the good actions result from his determination, and contribute to the prosperity of the whole; and yet that the liberty of moral agents not being in the least affected by this determination,

they deserve praise or blame in the same manner as if their actions had not been predetermined. But these are some of the fundamental principles of Calvinism; and if the Scripture, both by general expressions, and by instances illustrating and exemplifying such expressions, gives its sanction to these principles, we have found a considerable support which the Calvinistic system derives from Scripture.

SECTION II.

THE predestination, of which the Scripture speaks, is ascribed to the good pleasure of God.

There does not occur in the Greek Testament any substantive word equivalent to predestination. But the verb *προορίζω*, *prædestino*, is used in different places; *προθεσις*, *εκλογη*, *εκλεκτοι*, also occur;* and there does not appear to be any unwarrantable departure from the style of the New Testament in the language commonly used upon this subject. But it is not agreed, and it is not incontrovertibly clear, whether the sacred writers employed the words upon which this language has been framed, in the sense affixed to it by the Calvinists. There are two systems upon this point; and as these systems extend their influence to the interpretation of a great part of Scripture, it is proper to state distinctly the grounds upon which they rest.

The system by which all those, who do not hold the Calvinistic tenets, expound that predestination of which the Scripture speaks, is of the following kind. It appears from Scripture that God was pleased very early to make a discrimination amongst the children of Adam, as to the measure in which he imparted to them religious knowledge. The family of Abraham were selected amidst abounding idolatry to be the depositories of faith in one God, and of the hope of a Messiah: and they are presented to us in Scripture under the characters of the church, the peculiar people, the children of God. But the Old Testament contains many hints, which are fully unfolded in the New, of a purpose to extend the bounds of the church, and to admit men of all nations into that relation with the Supreme Being, which for many ages was the portion of the posterity of Abraham. This purpose, formed in the divine mind from the beginning, began to be executed when the apostles of Jesus went forth preaching the gospel to every creature. It was a purpose so different from the prejudices in which they had been educated, and it appeared to their own minds so magnificent, so interesting and delightful, (after they were enabled to comprehend it,) that it occupies a considerable place in all their discourses and writings. It made a blessed change upon the moral and religious condition of the persons to whom these discourses and writings were generally addressed. For all former communications from heaven had been confined to the land of Judea; and the other nations of the earth, having been educated in idolatry, had no hereditary title to the privileges of the people of God. But the execution of that purpose declared in the gospel placed them upon a level with

* Ephes. i. Rom. ix. xi. 1 Pet. i. 1.

the chosen race. Accordingly Paul, the apostle of the gentiles, in many of his epistles, addresses the whole body of professing Christians to whom he writes, as elect, saints, predestinated to the adoption of children; and magnifies the purpose, or as he often calls it, the mystery, which in other ages was not made known, but had been revealed to him, and was published to all, that *τα εθνη*, the gentiles, who were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, were called to be fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of faith. Eph. iii. 3—7. By contrasting the enormity of the vices which had been habitual to them while they lived in idolatry, with the spiritual blessings, or the advantages for improving in virtue and attaining eternal life, which they enjoyed through the gospel, he cherishes their thankfulness to God for his unmerited grace in pardoning their past transgressions, and he excites them to the practice of those virtues which became their new faith. When we employ this leading idea of all the epistles of Paul as a key to the meaning of particular passages which are much quoted in support of the Calvinistic system, the predestination of which he speaks, appears to be nothing more than the purpose of placing the inhabitants of all countries where the gospel is preached in the same favourable circumstances with respect to religion as the Jews were of old: the elect are the persons chosen out of the world, and called to the knowledge of the gospel; and the spiritual blessings, which the apostle represents as common to all the members of the Christian societies whom he addresses, are the advantages flowing from that knowledge.

It is allowed that predestination, even in this sense, originates in the good pleasure of God. As he chose the posterity of Abraham, not because they were more mighty or more virtuous than other nations, but because he loved their fathers, so he dispenses to whomsoever he will, the inestimable blessings connected with the publication of the Gospel. To nations who had been the most corrupt this saving light was sent; to individuals whose attainments did not seem to prepare them for this heavenly knowledge the Spirit revealed those “things that are freely given to us of God;” and our Lord has taught us, that instead of presuming to complain of that revelation, which the Almighty was not bound to give to any, having been sent to some parts of the world and not to others, it is our wisdom and our duty to acquiesce in the sovereignty of the divine administration, and to say with him, Matth. xi. 25, 26, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

But although those, who admit of predestination only in this sense, acknowledge that it originates in the good pleasure of God, yet they do not consider this acknowledgment as giving any countenance to the Calvinistic system. They say that we are not warranted to record expressions, which originally marked a purpose of sending the blessings of the Gospel to all countries, as implying a purpose of confining eternal life to some individuals in all countries; and that although the Sovereign of the universe is accountable to none in dispensing the knowledge of the Gospel, any more than in dispensing the measures of skill, sagacity, or bodily strength, by which individuals are distinguished, because in the end he will render to all men according to their improvement of the advantages which they

enjoy, yet it does not follow that it is consistent with the impartiality and universal beneficence of our Father in heaven to make such a distinction in conferring inward grace, as shall certainly conduct some of his creatures to everlasting happiness, whilst others are left without remedy to perish in their sins.

The system of interpretation which I have now explained has been adopted and defended by very able men; by Whitby, the author of the commentary upon the New Testament; by Dr. Clarke, whose sermons discover more knowledge of Scripture than any other sermons that have been printed; and by Taylor of Norwich, author of a *Key to the Epistle to the Romans*, who, in a long introductory essay, has unfolded the ideas now stated, and made various use of them. The system is extremely plausible. It draws an interpretation of epistles, letters to different churches, from the known situation of these churches, and from the known ideas of the writer; and by considering particular passages in connexion with the scope of the epistle, it gives an explication of them, which, in general, is most rational and satisfying. The light, which every one who has lectured upon an epistle can communicate to the people by the application of this system, is so pleasing to himself, and so instructive to them, that he is apt to be confirmed in thinking it the full interpretation of the writer's meaning. And I have no difficulty in saying, that if the Calvinistic doctrine derived no other support from Scripture than that which can fairly be drawn from our finding the words predestination, elect, and other similar words frequently recurring in the epistles, it might seem to an intelligent inquirer and a sound critic, that that doctrine had arisen rather by detaching particular texts from the contexts, and applying them in a sense which did not enter into the mind of the sacred writers, than by forming an enlarged comprehension of their views.

But after paying this just tribute to the system which I have explained, and after admitting that more stress is laid upon some particular texts, which are commonly quoted as Scripture authority for the Calvinistic doctrine, than they can well bear, I proceed to state fully the grounds of the other system of interpretation, according to which there is mention made in Scripture of a predestination of individuals arising from the mere good pleasure of God: and I entertain no doubt that the observations now to be made will appear sufficient to warrant the Calvinists in saying, that they do not pervert Scripture, when they pretend to find a general language pervading many parts of it which evidently favours their doctrine.

1. The former interpretation proceeded upon this ground, that the epistles are addressed to Christian societies, all the members of which enjoyed in common the advantages of the preaching of the Gospel, but all the members of which cannot be supposed to have been in the number of those who shall finally be saved; and hence it is inferred, that such expressions as occur in the beginning of the Epistle to the Ephesians, mean nothing more than that change upon their condition, that external advantage common to the whole society, which God, in execution of the purpose formed by him from the beginning, had, through the publication of the Gospel, conferred upon all. Admitting that many of the persons addressed as saints and elect shall not finally

be saved, still these words imply something more than a change upon the outward condition; and there is no necessity for our departing so far from their natural and obvious meaning, as to bring it down to mere external advantage, because the apostle was not warranted to make a distinction between those who are predestinated to life, and those who are left to perish in their sins. This distinction is one of those secret things which belong to the Lord, and which he has not intrusted to his ministers. They are bound in charity to believe, that all to whom the external blessings are imparted, and who appear to improve them with thankfulness, receive also that inward grace by which these blessings are made effectual to salvation; and they have no title to separate any persons from the society of the faithful, but those who have been guilty of open and flagrant transgressions. Such persons the apostle frequently marks out in his epistles; and he warns the Christians against holding intercourse with them; but to all who remained in the society, he sends his benediction, and of all of them he hoped things that accompany salvation.

2. Although many passages in the epistles, which speak of predestination and of the elect, might seem to receive their full interpretation from the purpose of God to call other nations besides the Jews to the knowledge of the Gospel, yet there are places in the epistles of Paul, which intimate that he had a further meaning. Of this kind is the ninth chapter to the Romans, and a part of the eleventh; two passages of Scripture which give the greatest trouble to those who deny the truth of the Calvinistic doctrine, which have received a long commentary from Arminius himself, and from many Arminian writers. but which, after all the attempts that have been made to accommodate them to their system, are fitted, in my opinion, to leave upon the mind of every candid reader, an indelible impression that this system does not come up to the mind of the apostle. The ninth chapter to the Romans is one of the most difficult passages in Scripture; and I am far from saying that the Calvinistic system makes it plain. There is an obscurity and extent in the subject which is beyond the reach of our faculties, and which represses our presumptuous attempts to penetrate the counsels of the Almighty. But after reading that chapter, and the eleventh, with due care in the original, the amount of them, it will probably be thought, may be thus stated. God chose the posterity of Abraham out of all the families of the earth. He made a distinction in the posterity of the patriarch, by confining to the seed of Isaac the blessings which he had promised; of the twin sons of Isaac, Esau and Jacob, he declared before they were born, that he preferred the younger to the elder, and rejecting Esau he transmitted the blessing through the children of Jacob. In all these limitations God exercised his sovereignty, and executed his own purpose according to the election of grace; and he made still a further limitation with regard to the children of Jacob. For all they who are descended from the patriarch, according to the flesh, are not the children of promise; all who are of Israel are not truly Israel, or the people of God. The calling of the nation of Israel is, indeed, without repentance; and, therefore, Israel as a nation, shall yet be gathered; but many individuals who belong to that nation shall perish. "Israel," as the apostle speaks, understanding by that word

all the descendants of Jacob, "hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it," *i. e.* those who are elected have obtained it; a remnant is saved, while the rest were blinded; and in place of that great body of Israelites, who thus appear by the event not to have been elected, God hath called a people which before were not his people; he is made manifest by the Gospel to them that asked not after him, and through the fall of a great part of Israel, salvation is come to the Gentiles.

To all the objections which human reason can suggest against this dispensation, the answer made by the apostle is conveyed in this question, "who art thou that repliest against God?" He represents by a striking similitude, the condition of the creatures as entirely at the disposal of him who made them: and he concludes all his reasoning in these words, Rom. xi. 33—36, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever, Amen." In these verses, the very principles which are the foundation of Calvinism are laid down by an inspired apostle, and applied by him to account for this fact, that of a nation, who are chosen by God, many individuals perish; and the account which they furnish is this, that under the declared purpose of calling the whole nation to the knowledge of the truth, there was a secret purpose respecting individuals, which secret purpose stands in the salvation of some and the destruction of others; while the declared purpose stands also respecting the whole nation. If these principles apply to the peculiar people of God under the Mosaic dispensation, they may be applied also to Christians, who, by enjoying the gospel, come in place of that peculiar people, and are so designed in Scripture: and the apostle seems to teach us by his reasoning with regard to Israel, that we have not attained his full meaning, when we interpret what he says concerning the predestination of Christians merely of those outward privileges, which being common to all are abused by many; but that with regard to them, as with regard to Israel, there is a purpose of election according to grace which shall stand, because they who are elected shall obtain the end which all profess to seek, while the rest are blinded. According to this method of interpreting these two chapters, we learn from the apostle that there is the same sovereignty,—the same exercise of the good pleasure of God in the election of individuals as in the illumination of nations, that both are accounted for upon the same principles, and that with respect to both, God silences all who say that there is unrighteousness in him by that declaration, which he employed when he conferred a signal mark of his favour upon Moses, "I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion upon whom I will have compassion."

3. There are passages both in the Epistles and in other parts of Scripture, which appear to declare the election of some individuals and the reprobation of others, without any regard to the nations to which they belong. I do not mean that there are passages of this

kind, the application of which in support of the Calvinistic system has not been controverted; for upon a subject which the Scriptures have left involved in much obscurity, and upon which they have chosen rather to furnish incidental hints than a complete delineation, it is easy for ingenious men to give a plausible exposition of particular texts, so as to accommodate them to their own system. I do not consider that all the texts which are quoted in support of the Calvinistic system admit, according to the rules of sound and fair criticism, of that interpretation which is adopted by those who quote them: nor do I mean to hold forth as insignificant the objections made to the Calvinistic interpretation of the texts which I am now to mention. But I arrange them under this third head, because it appears to me that the interpretation connected with that arrangement is the most natural, and that when taken in conjunction with the other support which the Calvinistic system derives from Scripture, they contain an argument of real weight.

1. Our Lord calls the Christians *ἐκλεκτοί*, Matth. xxiv. 22, 24, and Luke xviii. 7, when this name does not seem to have any reference to the purpose of calling the Gentiles, or to the election of his apostles to their office. The name is given to those Jews who had embraced the gospel before the destruction of Jerusalem. They were distinguished from their countrymen by their faith in Christ; and on account of this distinction were permitted to escape that destruction which overtook all the rest of their nation. Now the faith of these Christian Jews is represented by the name *ἐκλεκτοί*, a word which here can have no reference to the distinction between Jews and Gentiles, but seems employed on purpose to remind them that their faith flowed, not from any exertion of their own, but from the good pleasure and appointment of God, who chose them out from amongst their countrymen.

2. Our Lord comprehends his true disciples, all who are to be saved by him, under this general expression, John vi. 37, 39, *παν ὃ δέδωκε οὖ μοι ὁ πατήρ*. He applies, indeed, in John xvii. the phrase *οἱ δέδωκα; μοι* to all the twelve apostles, not excluding Judas; so that their being given him by God means nothing more in that place than the phrase used John xv. 16, *οὐχ ὑμεῖς με ἐξελεξάσθε, ἀλλ' ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς ἐξελεξαμην*;—their designation and election to the office of Apostles, without any respect to their personal character or to their own salvation. But when the two chapters are compared, it is instantly perceived that the same phrase is used in different senses; because it is said, John vi. 39, “this is the Father’s will, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing;” whereas it is said, John xvii. 12, “those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.” Our Lord’s expression in chap. vi. being thus clearly discriminated from the similar expression in chap. xvii. seems to imply that the infallible salvation of all true Christians arise, from the destination of God.

3. Acts viii. 48. *Καὶ ἐπιστευσαν ὅσοι ἦσαν τεταγμένοι εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον*. All who oppose the Calvinistic system understand *τεταγμένοι* to mean nothing more than the English word *disposed*, *i. e.* persons who had prepared themselves, who were qualified by the disposition of their minds for eternal life. But this use of the word is neither agreeable to

its primary meaning, nor supported by any authority. The word properly means set in order for eternal life ; and the ordering is marked, by the passive voice, as proceeding from some other being. So the powers that are, Rom. xiii. 1, by which the apostle means civil authority, ὑπο τοῦ Θεοῦ τεταγμένοι εἰσι. Ὅσοι is manifestly a partitive of the Gentiles, all of whom had heard the same discourse preached by Paul and Barnabas in the synagogue of Antioch, and all of whom had rejoiced in hearing it ; and the clause appears intended to account for its producing an effect upon some, of more permanent and substantial value than the gladness which it had produced in all. The account given is the destination of God, who, having meant to bring some of them to eternal life, set them in order for that end, by giving them faith.

4. There is one passage in the epistle to the Romans, where the apostle uses the words προορίζω, ἐκλεκτοί, προθεσίς, without seeming to have in his eye the difference between the Jews and Gentiles. Rom. viii. 28—33. Although the twenty-ninth verse be understood to mean nothing more than this, that God ordained that those who are the called according to his purpose should endure suffering like Jesus Christ, it requires a manifest perversion of the following verses to deprive the Calvinistic system of the support, which it obviously derives both from the particular phrase and from the train of the apostle's reasoning. It would seem, indeed, that the first part of the twenty-ninth verse favours the Arminian system, by making foreknowledge previous to predestination. To this the Calvinists are accustomed to give one or other of the following answers. They either understand προέγνω to mean not foreknowledge, but that peculiar discriminating affection of which the elect are the objects ; or, answering in a manner which has a less captious and evasive appearance, they admit that a perfect foreknowledge of all that the elect are to do enters into the decree of predestination, but they deny that it is the cause of their election, because all that is done by the elect is in consequence of the strength communicated to them by the grace of God. This answer to the Arminian interpretation of Rom. viii. 29, leads me to the third head, under which I arranged that support which the Calvinistic system derives from Scripture.

SECTION III.

THE various descriptions of that change of character, by which men are prepared for eternal life, seem intended to magnify the power and to declare the efficacy of that grace by which it is produced.

All the passages usually quoted under this head furnish clear evidence of what is called in theological language grace, an influence of God upon the mind of man, and in their proper and literal meaning seem to denote that kind of influence which enters into the Calvinistic system. Yet many of them are not decisive of the controversy between the Calvinists and the Arminians, because the Arminians find it possible to give them an interpretation not inconsistent with

their account of the nature of that influence. Thus they are accustomed to quote that saying of our Lord, "without me ye can do nothing," as a proof that preventing grace is necessary to all men. They interpret that saying of the apostle, "faith is the gift of God," as only a proof that without an administration of the means of grace, and a moral suasion accompanying them, none can attain faith; and they consider this expression of our Lord, "No man can come to me except the Father draw him," as marking in the most significant manner that kind of moral suasion, of which the Almighty speaks by the prophet Hosea, "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love." This specimen shows that upon a subject so far removed from observation and experience, it is not difficult for ingenious men to elude, in a very plausible manner, the argument drawn from those texts, which a person educated with Calvinistic ideas considers as unequivocal proofs of his system. Yet there are three kinds of passages in Scripture, which, when taken together, it appears to me almost impossible to reconcile with the Arminian account of grace.

The first are those which represent the natural powers of the human mind, attainments in knowledge, and the most distinguished advantages in respect of religion, as of none avail in producing faith without the action of the Spirit of God; while his teaching is represented as infallibly producing that effect. Of this kind are the following: 1 Cor. ii. 14; i. 22, 23, 24; iii. 5, 6, 7. John vi. 45.

The second are those which derive the account of this inefficacy of all the other means that seem fitted to produce faith, from the corruption of human nature. This corruption is chiefly described in epistles addressed to Christian churches, composed of those who had formerly been heathens; and the descriptions have a particular reference to the vices which abounded amongst them before they were converted to the Christian faith. But the history of the world and the experience of all ages may satisfy us that these descriptions, with some allowance for local manners, for the progress of civilization, and for the influence of Christianity, are applicable to the general state of mankind. The apostle begins his epistle to the Romans with a formal proof that all men, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin; and this universal corruption of the posterity of Adam, although the foundation of the Gospel, is by no means a peculiar doctrine of revelation, but, independently of that authority, is established by various incontrovertible evidence. Now all the Scripture statements of this corruption imply a moral inability to attain that character which is necessary to salvation. Of this kind are the following: Eph. ii. 1. Eph. iv. 18, 19. Rom. viii. 7, 8.

The third are those which represent the action of the Spirit of God in removing this inability, by phrases exactly corresponding to these descriptions of the corruption. Of this kind are the following: Ezek. xxxvi. 26. John iii. 5. 2 Cor. v. 17. Eph. ii. 10. Eph. i. 19: where the power exerted in quickening those who are dead in sins is compared to the power which was exerted in raising Christ from the dead. Phil. ii. 13.

The Arminians, considering the literal sense of these passages as subversive of moral agency, attempt to give such an explication of them as is consistent with the Arminian account of grace. But if the

Calvinists are able to show that a renovation of the powers of human nature leaves a man as much a moral agent as he was at the beginning—that his liberty is not destroyed by the action of God upon his mind, then there is no occasion for having recourse to that Arminian commentary, which takes away the propriety and significancy of the figures used in these phrases; but we may preserve the consistency of Scripture and the analogy of faith, by admitting that kind of influence which corresponds to the corruption of human nature, which, although resisted at first in consequence of that corruption, is in the end efficacious, and which owes its efficacy not to any quality that the recipient possesses independently of divine grace, but to the good pleasure and the power of that Being, who is as able to quicken a soul dead in sin, as to raise a body from the dust, and who declares in Scripture the sovereignty of his grace, by teaching us that all other means are insignificant, till he is pleased to renew the soul which he made.

SECTION IV.

IN order to complete the view of that support which the Calvinistic system derives from Scripture, it only remains to state the answer which the Calvinists give to that objection against their system, which has been drawn from the commands, the counsels and the exhortations of Scripture. This objection, with which all Arminian books are filled, I shall present in the words of Dr. Whitby, taken from different parts of his discourses on the Five Points.

“If conversion be wrought only by the unfrustrable operation of God, then vain are all the commands and exhortations addressed to wicked men to turn from their evil ways: for it is no more in their power to do this than to create a world. Vain are all the threatenings denounced in Scripture against those who go on without amendment, because such threatenings can only move the elect by the fear of their perishing, which is a false and an impossible supposition; and can only move those who are not elected by suggesting the possibility of their avoiding the death and ruin threatened, although it is to them inevitable. Vain are all the promises of pardon to those who repent, because these are promises made upon a condition which to the non-elect is impossible.”—“All the commands and exhortations directed by God to the faithful to persevere in well-doing, all cautions to take heed lest they fall away, all expressions which suspend our future happiness on this condition, that we continue steadfast to the end, are plain indications that God hath made no absolute decree that good men shall not fall away. For as when motives are used to induce men to embrace Christianity, or to perform any Christian duty, these motives contain an evidence that it is possible for men to do otherwise, so also when motives are used to induce men to persevere in the profession which they have undertaken, they necessarily contain an evidence, that any man who is induced by them to persevere in the course of a Christian, had it in his power not to persevere.”—“Can God be serious and in good earnest in calling men to faith and

repentance, and yet serious and in good earnest in his decree to deny them that grace without which they neither can believe nor repent? If we consider with what vehemence and what pathetic expressions God desires the obedience and reformation of his people, can it be rationally imagined that there was any thing wanting on his part, and that he should himself withhold the means sufficient to enable them to do what he thus earnestly wishes they had done?"

The answer made by the Calvinists to all reasonings and interrogations of this kind, appears to me to consist of the five following branches, which I have arranged in the order that is most natural, and which I shall not spread out at length, but leave to be filled up by private reading and reflection.

1. The Calvinists say that it is a misrepresentation of their doctrine to state the efficacy of the grace of God as superseding commands, counsels, and exhortations, or rendering them unnecessary with regard to the elect. The purpose of that grace is to produce in the elect the character which is inseparably connected with salvation. For the Calvinists, no less than the Arminians, hold that the promise of eternal life is conditional, suspended upon perseverance in well-doing. What is peculiar to them is, that they consider the fulfilment of the condition in those who are elected to eternal life as depending upon the action of the Spirit of God: but the method in which they reconcile this action with the liberty of a moral agent implies the exhibition of all the moral inducements fitted to act upon reasonable beings; and although they hold that all means are ineffectual without the grace of God, yet it appears to them that when the means of improving the human character, which the Scripture employs, are considered as parts of that series of causes and effects by which the Almighty executes his decree, the necessity and the efficacy of them is established upon the surest ground. Hence the Calvinists do not perceive any inconsistency between the promise, "I will give you a new heart," and the precept, "make you a new heart and a new spirit;" between the declaration, "we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works," and the precept, which seems to imply that we are our own workmanship, "that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Far from perceiving any inconsistency between the promise and the precept, they admire the harmony with which the two conspire in the infallible production of the same end. For the divine counsels, commands, and invitations to obedience, by making that impression upon the minds of the elect which the authority and kindness therein exhibited have a tendency to produce upon reasonable beings, are the instruments of fulfilling the divine intention, by conducting the elect in a manner conformable to their nature, and through the free exercise of every Christian grace, to that happiness which had been from eternity destined for them.

2. The Calvinists say that these counsels and commands, which are intended by God to produce their full effect only with regard to the elect, are addressed indifferently to all, for this reason, because it was not revealed to the writers of the New Testament, nor is it now revealed to the ministers of the gospel, who the elect are. The Lord

knoweth them that are his : but he hath not given this knowledge to any of the children of men. We are not warranted to infer from the former sins of any person that he shall not at some future period be conducted by the grace of God to repentance ; and therefore we are not warranted to infer that the counsels and exhortations of the divine word, which are some of the instruments of the grace of God, shall finally prove vain with regard to any individual. But although it is in this way impossible for a discrimination to be made in the manner of publishing the gospel, and although many may receive the calls and commands of the gospel who are not in the end to be saved, the Calvinists do not admit that even with regard to them, these calls and commands are wholly without effect. For,

3. They say that the publication of the gospel is attended with real benefit even to those who are not elected. It points out to them their duty ; it restrains them from flagrant transgressions which would be productive of much present inconvenience, and would aggravate their future condemnation : it has contributed to the diffusion and the enlargement of moral and religious knowledge, to the refinement of manners, and to the general welfare of society ; and it exhibits such a view of the condition of man and of the grace from which the remedy proceeds, as magnifies both the righteousness and the compassion of the Supreme Ruler, and leaves without excuse those who continue in sin.

4. The Calvinists say further, that although these general uses of the publication of the gospel come very far short of that saving benefit which is confined to the elect, there is no want of meaning or of sincerity in the expostulations of Scripture, or in its reproaches and pathetic expressions of regret with regard to those, who do not obey the counsels and commands that are addressed to all. For these counsels and commands declare what is the duty of all, what they feel they ought to perform, what is essential to their present and their future happiness, and what no physical necessity prevents them from doing. There is indeed a moral inability, a defect in their will. But the very object of counsels and commands is to remove this defect ; and if such a defect rendered it improper for the Supreme Ruler to issue commands, every sin would carry with it its own excuse ; and the creatures of God might always plead that they were absolved from the obligation of his law, because they were indisposed to obey it. It is admitted by the Calvinists, that the moral inability in those who are not elected is of such a kind, as will infallibly prevent their obeying the commands of God ; and it is a part of their system, that the Being who issues these commands has resolved to withhold from such persons the grace which alone is sufficient to remove that inability. In accounting for these commands, therefore, they are obliged to have recourse to a distinction between the secret and the revealed will of God. They understand, by his revealed will, that which is perceptive, which declares the duty of his creatures, containing commands agreeable to the sentiments of their minds and the constitution of their nature, and delivering promises which shall certainly be fulfilled to all who obey the commands. They understand, by his secret will, his own purpose in distributing his favours and arranging the condition of his creatures ; a purpose which is founded

upon the wisest reasons, and is infallibly carried into execution by his sovereign power, but which not being made known to his creatures cannot possibly be the rule of their conduct. This distinction, although the subject of much obloquy in all Arminian books, appears, upon a fair examination, only a more guarded method of stating what we found to be said by the advocates for universal redemption. Their language is, that God intends to save all men by the death of Christ, but that this intention becomes effectual only with regard to those who repent and believe. The Calvinists, not choosing to hold a language which implies that an intention of God can prove fruitless, interpret all the counsels, and commands, and expostulations, which are urged in proof of an intention to save all men, as expressions only of a revealed will, but not as implying any purpose which is to be carried into effect. When they find in Scripture such general propositions as the following, “he that believeth on me hath everlasting life,”—“whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy;” they consider them both as declaring a rule of conduct, and as delivering a promise which is fulfilled with regard to every individual who believes and repents; and as they know that these propositions never can prove false, so it does not appear to them that there is any inconsistency between the general terms in which the propositions are enunciated, and the special grace by which God produces faith and repentance in those whom he has predestinated to everlasting life.

5. The Calvinists say, in the last place, that if there is a difficulty in reconciling the earnestness with which God appears in Scripture to seek the salvation of all men, with the infallible execution of his decree that only some shall be saved, this difficulty is not peculiar to their system, but belongs to the Arminian also. If with the Socinians we abridge the foreknowledge of God, then his counsels and exhortations to all men will appear to us the natural expressions of an anxiety, such as we often feel, about an effect, of the production of which we are uncertain. But if with the Arminians we admit that the determinations of free agents were from eternity known to God, then we must admit also that he addresses counsels and exhortations to those upon whom he knows they will not produce their full effect. As he sent of old by Moses a command to Pharaoh to let the children of Israel go, although at the very time of giving the command he says, “and I am sure that he will not let you go;”* as our Lord said to his disciples, “watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation,”† although the whole tenor of the discourse, of which these words are a part, discovers his certain knowledge that all the disciples were to yield to temptation, Peter by denying, and the rest by forsaking him: so the word of God continues to warn men against sins which they will commit, to prescribe duties which they will not perform, and to give them, in the language of the warmest affection, counsels upon which the obstinacy of their hearts is to pour contempt. The answer made by the Arminians to the Socinian charge of a want of seriousness and sincerity in warnings, precepts, and counsels, uttered by a Being who foresees their final inefficacy, is this, that it is fit and proper for God to declare to men their duty; that the perverseness of

* Exod. iii. 18, 19.

† Matth. xxvi. 41.

their wills does not diminish their obligations, and that his foreknowledge of that perverseness has no influence in giving his counsels less effect upon their minds. The very same answer may be adopted by the Calvinists. For although they infer, from the perfection of the Supreme Mind, and from various expressions in Scripture, that there is a decree by which certain persons are elected, while others are left to perish; yet, as the particulars of this decree are nowhere made known to us, they cannot regard it as in any respect the rule of our conduct; and although they do not think themselves at liberty to follow the Socinians in denying the extent of the divine understanding, yet, like the Socinians, they receive the authoritative injunctions of the divine word as the will of our Creator; they study to learn from thence, not the unknown purposes of divine wisdom, but the measure of our obedience; and they say with Moses, who, in his last address to the children of Israel, Deut. xxix. 29, appears to give his sanction to the distinction made by them, "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."

CHAPTER XI.

HISTORY OF CALVINISM.

THE history of that system of opinions, now called Calvinistic, extends almost from the beginning of the Christian era to the present period. It is not my province to detail the names of all those by whom these opinions have been held, the ages in which they lived, the books which they wrote, the opposition or the encouragement which they received. But I think it may be interesting and useful to subjoin to the discussions in which we have lately been engaged, a short comprehensive view of the state of the opinions which were the subjects of the discussions, during the different stages of their progress.

Those who hold the Calvinistic system find its origin in several expressions of our Lord, and in many parts of the writings of Paul. Those who hold the opposite system give a different interpretation of all the passages in which this origin is sought for. The dispute is not decided by referring to the most ancient Christian writers, for they express themselves generally in the language of Scripture with much simplicity; they do not appear to have possessed great critical talents; and they avoid entering into any profound speculations. It is not ascertained what was the system of Christians in the first four centuries, or whether they had formed any system upon this intricate subject. But in the fifth century systems very similar to those which are now held were opposed to one another. The voluminous writings of Augustine, by whom one of the systems was established, are extant; and we learn the outlines of the opposite system, both from the large extracts out of the works of its supporters, which are found in his writings, and from other collateral testimony. Although the system combated by Augustine was not completely evolved till his day, yet the principles from which it took its rise may be traced back to those philosophical speculations which, in the former centuries, had occupied a great part of the attention of Christian writers. Even in the days of the apostles, some who had been educated in the schools of the philosophers, professed to embrace Christianity; and the number of learned Christians continued to increase in every century. Not content with the simple form in which the doctrines of revelation had been held by their more illiterate predecessors, these learned converts introduced a spirit of research, a refinement of speculation, and a systematical arrangement, of which the sacred writers have not set an example. The tenets, which many of these converts had imbibed in their youth, and which they were far from relinquishing when they

assumed the name of Christians, were so opposite to the truth,—and the pride of human science, in which they had been educated, was so inconsistent with that temper which Jesus requires in all who are taught by him, that the gospel, instead of being improved, was in various respects corrupted by this early mixture of philosophy. It is probable that when the apostle Paul speaks in his epistles of a danger that Christians might be “spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit,”* and of “oppositions of science falsely so called,”† he means that kind of philosophy which was characteristic of the Gnostic sects; and it is known, that in the first three centuries the grossest adulterations of Christianity arose from the principles of that philosophy.

Many sects of Christians were in this manner led to account for those differences of human character which have always been observed, by holding that some souls are naturally and essentially evil, being either entirely formed by the evil spirit, or so completely under his influence as to be unable to emancipate themselves; and that others derive so large a proportion of their nature from the good Spirit, as to find no difficulty in preserving their integrity. The errors connected with this physical discrimination of souls were combated with much learning about the end of the third century by Origen, who had been bred in the Platonic school of Alexandria, and who brought from the philosophy there taught those sublime conceptions of the Deity, which do not admit of independent power being ascribed to a being set in opposition to God. He taught that all souls originally proceeded from the Deity; that they were by nature capable of being either good or evil, and that the character which they attain depends upon their own free will,—upon the exercise which they choose to make of the powers given them by their Creator.

The very important services, which the erudition and the labours of Origen rendered to the Christian church, procured a considerable degree of credit to the most singular of his opinions in the countries where his works were known. Various circumstances conspired, in the course of the fourth century, to diffuse through the west some knowledge of his writings; and Pelagius, a native of Britain, who made them his chief study during his residence at Rome in the beginning of the fifth century, drew from the doctrine which Origen had opposed to Manichean errors, the fundamental position of his system, that notwithstanding the sin of our first parents, we are able, by the powers of our nature, without any supernatural aid, to yield obedience to the commands of God. The report of this system, which, from its affinity to the doctrine of Origen, found with many an easy reception, called forth the exertions of Augustine, bishop of Hippo, in Africa. He had formerly written against the Manicheans; but it appeared to him that Pelagius, who, in his zeal to maintain that no souls were the work of the evil spirit, denied the present corruption of human nature, had gone beyond Origen, and had departed far from the truth; and in his voluminous works he laid down a system of predestination and grace, which, with some little variety of expression, is the same with that which we have called Calvinistic. Augustine acknowledged

* Col. ii. 8.

† 1 Tim. vi. 20.

that in the course of his studying the Scriptures his sentiments had undergone a considerable change; and those who were adverse to his system affirmed that in his writings against Pelagius he adopted many positions which he had condemned in the Manicheans. We are not bound to defend the consistency of all that Augustine has said: but if his system be founded in reason and in Scripture, it may unquestionably be discriminated from the Manichean system; and we, who hold the Calvinistic tenets, think that we are able to make the discrimination. For we consider the decree, by which a wise and good Being from eternity ordained all that is to be, as essentially distinct from that fate which excludes every exercise of intelligence in fixing the great scheme of the universe; and we consider the measure of evil which, for reasons unknown to us, the Almighty Sovereign permits to exist in his work, as leaving unshaken those fundamental principles of religion, which are completely undermined by the belief that this evil originates from the power of an opposite spirit not under the control of God, or from an essential pravity in matter which he is unable to remove.

From the days of Augustine two opposite systems of predestination have been known in the Christian church, and each of them has had able and numerous defenders. The system of Pelagius was modified in the writings of Cassian and Faustus; and, under the less offensive form which is known by the name of Semi-Pelagianism, it obtained a favourable reception in the East, from which it originated. But in the western parts of Christendom, where the writings of the learned Augustine were held in the highest veneration, the system which he had delineated received the sanction both of general councils and of the Bishops of Rome, who were rising by insensible steps to the station which they afterwards held: and under this authority it came to be regarded as the orthodox faith of the Latin church. The opposite system, however, had many adherents, both in Britain, the native country of Pelagius, and in Gaul, where Cassian first published the Semi-Pelagian doctrine; and it appears that in the universal ignorance which overspread Europe during the succeeding centuries, many who professed to hold the orthodox faith were unacquainted with the extent of the doctrine of Augustine. Accordingly we find Godeschalcus, an illustrious Saxon monk, persecuted in the ninth century by his superiors, and condemned by some councils assembled to judge him, for holding doctrines which seem to correspond in all points with the tenets now called Calvinistic: we find his memory vindicated by succeeding councils, who declared their approbation of his doctrine; and we learn from the history of his opinions, that the Christian church in those days, as in all the controversies upon the same intricate subject in succeeding ages, veered between two systems, of which sometimes the one, and sometimes the other, was most ably defended.

The question occasioned by the opposition of these systems, after having been buried for some centuries, like every other, in the barbarity of the times, was revived in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by Thomas Aquinas, and Joannes Scotus, the fathers of school divinity, who, applying the language of the philosophy of Aristotle to theological questions, appeared to speak with a precision formerly

unknown, but who, multiplying words far beyond the number of clear ideas, increased the natural darkness of many subjects which they pretended to discuss. I will not undertake the grievous and worthless labour of explaining the terms in which the doctrine of Augustine was stated by Thomas Aquinas, a monk of the Dominican order, nor those in which a doctrine somewhat similar to that which is now opposed to Augustine was defended by Scotus, a monk of the Franciscan order. The Latin church, of which the Bishop of Rome had become the acknowledged head, continued to be agitated by the controversy between the Thomists and the Scotists; insomuch that although that church venerated the name of Augustine, and professed to build its tenets upon his authority, individual writers were very far from being agreed as to the points that are embraced by his system, and the avowed creed of the church was gradually removed at a greater distance from the doctrine of Augustine.

When the enormous height which the growing corruptions of Popery had attained in the sixteenth century induced Martin Luther, a friar of the order of St. Austin, to begin the reformation, he adhered to the principles of that doctrine in which he had been educated; and in exposing to the indignation of mankind the shameful traffic of indulgences, he derived, from a system which taught the corruption of human nature and the efficacy of divine grace, a convincing answer to those tenets of the church of Rome concerning the merit of good works upon which that traffic was founded. All the parts of the system of predestination which are delineated in the writings of Augustine were taught by Luther. But Melancthon, who was at first his colleague, and who succeeded to a considerable share of his influence after his death, was led by an accommodating temper, and by a concurrence of circumstances, to adopt principles which it does not appear to me possible to distinguish from the Semi-Pelagian. These principles entered into the confessions of faith and apologies for the cause of reformation, which received the sanction of the name of Melancthon: they were recommended by his authority to many of the earliest reformers in Germany; and they continue to form a part of the creed of those churches which are called Lutheran.

In Switzerland, the reformation, which had been begun by Zuinglius, received the most valuable support from the learning, the abilities, and the industry of John Calvin, who settled at Geneva in the year 1541, and continued till his death in 1564 a zealous and indefatigable champion of that doctrine, which he professes to have learned from Augustine. In his *Christian Institutes*, which were first published in 1536, he acknowledges that it was the common opinion that God elected men according to his foreknowledge of their conduct, so that predestination rested upon the prescience of God. But in opposition to this opinion, which he says was both held by the vulgar, and had in all ages been defended by authors of great name, he lays down that system which we have been accustomed, in honour of its ablest supporter, to call by the name of Calvinism; and such was the impression made upon the minds of men by his writings, and so rapidly were his opinions disseminated by the numbers who flocked to the university which he established at Geneva, that the Calvinistic system of predestination was received by a great part of those Chris-

tians who left the church of Rome, and even by many who had at first embraced the tenets of Melancthon. There came in this way to be a difference of opinion upon the subject of predestination between the Lutheran and the reformed churches. We apply the term Lutheran to the churches in the German empire, and in the different kingdoms of Europe, which adhered to the Confession of Augsburg, *Confessio Augustana*, the declaration of their faith presented by the Protestants to the Diet of the empire, held by Charles V. 1530, and to those explications which the controverted points not particularly stated in that confession received from the subsequent writings of Melancthon. We apply the term Reformed to the churches in Germany, in Switzerland, in the Netherlands, in Britain, in France, and in other parts of Europe, whose confessions of faith comprehended the peculiar tenets of Calvinism. The two words were used in this sense soon after the days of Calvin and Melancthon, and the same use of them still continues. When we speak of the reformation, we mean that revolution in the sentiments of a great part of the inhabitants of Europe with regard to religion, which was accomplished in the sixteenth century by the united labours of Luther, Melancthon, Zuinglius, Calvin, Beza, and other reformers. But when we speak of the Reformed Churches, we generally mean to distinguish them from the Lutheran; and the name implies that they are considered as having departed farther than the Lutheran from the corruptions of Popery. There are differences between the Reformed and the Lutheran Churches respecting ecclesiastical discipline and government which it may afterwards occur to mention. But the most important difference in point of doctrine respects the subject of which we are now speaking; the reformed, professing in their creeds and standards to hold the Calvinistic system of predestination; the Lutheran to adhere to the system of Melancthon.

John Knox, a disciple of Calvin, while he formed the constitution of the church of Scotland upon the plan of ecclesiastical government which Calvin had established in Geneva, introduced into Scotland all the tenets called Calvinistic; and although the Confession of Faith, the authentic standard of the faith of our church, does not pay any deference to the name or authority of the reformer—although the ministers of this church are not bound, by subscribing the Confession of Faith, to defend every part of the conduct of Calvin, and every sentence found in his writings, yet the leading features of the doctrine of our church concerning predestination are avowedly Calvinistic. In England, the first reformers, who appeared before the days of Calvin, followed in worship, and in the form of ecclesiastical government, the Lutheran churches in which they had received their education. But in the days of Queen Elizabeth, when the thirty-nine articles, which are the Confession of Faith of the church of England, came, after much preparation, to be published with royal authority, the doctrines of Calvin were held in universal estimation, were taught in the English universities, and were the creed of the dignified clergy whom the Queen employed in preparing the articles. Accordingly, even those, who hold that the seventeenth article admits of an interpretation not inconsistent with Arminianism, acknowledge that it was penned by Calvinists, and that the Calvinistic sense, which naturally

occurs to every reader, was truly the meaning of those who composed it. And upon this ground we think ourselves entitled to say that the two established churches of this island, although distinguished from the time of the Reformation in respect of discipline, worship, and government, were at first united in holding the same doctrine; and that the standards, which both churches continue to require their ministers to subscribe as the standards of their faith, were originally founded upon Calvinistic tenets.

Upon the Continent, where some churches were Lutheran and others Reformed, the points in dispute between them were brought strongly before the public about the beginning of the seventeenth century, by the writings of Arminius, professor of divinity in the university of Leyden. Arminius, although educated in the doctrines of the church of Geneva, had early entertained doubts concerning the Calvinistic system of predestination; and, after he was admitted professor of divinity, he did not consider himself bound by any authority, which he could not lawfully disobey, to teach that particular system. He possessed that vigorous mind, and that acute understanding, which prepare a man for deep investigation. He was not disposed to rest in the opinions of others; and his own conceptions of every subject to which he turned his attention were clear and comprehensive. The opinions concerning predestination, which were at that time held in the Lutheran churches, being more agreeable to his mind than the Calvinistic, received from him a scientific form. He laid the foundation of them in that view of the prescience of God formerly explained; and by following out leading ideas through all their consequences, he introduced that unity of principle, that harmony of parts, and that precision and clearness of language, which entitle his doctrine to the name of a system. This system, recommended by the abilities, the eloquence, and the reputation of Arminius, not only spread through the Lutheran churches, but made an impression upon the minds of many who had been educated in the principles of Calvinism; and, proceeding from an university founded in one of the Reformed churches, it encountered at its first appearance a most formidable opposition. Arminius died in 1609. But the hold which his principles had taken of the minds of men, and the zeal with which they were propagated by his disciples, excited much commotion immediately after his death. The inhabitants of the United Provinces, who held these principles, presented to the States-general in 1610 a petition or remonstrance, from which they received the name of remonstrants, by which they have ever since been distinguished. It happened that Grotius, and other leading men in the States who were at that time in opposition to the Prince of Orange, favoured the principles of the remonstrants. This circumstance naturally formed an union between the house of Orange and the contra-remonstrants, or Calvinists; and thus political interests came to mingle their influence in the discussion of theological questions. Many conferences were held between the Arminians and the Calvinists, without convincing either party. Many schemes to accomplish a reconciliation proved abortive; and at length it was resolved by the States of Holland, to summon a meeting of deputies from all the Protestant churches, after the manner of the General Councils, which had been

held in former ages, where the points in dispute might be canvassed and decided.

In the year 1618, there assembled at Dort, a town in the province of South Holland, deputies from the churches of the United Provinces, from Britain, and from many states in Germany, who formed what is known in ecclesiastical history by the name of the Synod of Dort, *Synodus Dordracena*. The learned and eloquent Episcopius, the successor of Arminius, appeared at the head of the leading men amongst the Arminians, or Remonstrants, to defend their cause. But being dissatisfied with the manner in which the Synod proposed to proceed, Episcopius and his adherents refused to submit to the directions which were given them as to the method of their defence, and in consequence of this refusal they were excluded from sitting in the assembly. After an hundred and fifty-four meetings, the five articles, in which the Arminians had at a former conference stated their doctrine, were formally condemned by the Synod as heretical. What we call the Calvinistic system of predestination, was declared by a confession of faith, founded on the decrees of the Synod, to be the orthodox faith of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands; and the catechism of Heidelberg, which was originally composed by order of the Elector Palatine for the use of his subjects, and which comprehends the leading principles of the Calvinistic system, was adopted as one of their standards, a method of instructing the young, and a directory for the public teaching of their ministers. In consequence of the judgment of the Synod of Dort, the Arminians were excommunicated, and were at first obliged to leave their possessions in the United Provinces. But they were recalled in a few years under a milder administration of government: they are allowed several churches in different cities of Holland; and they have a college at Amsterdam, where there has been a succession of able men, Episcopius, Limborch, Le Clere, and Wetstein; who, while they profess to instil into the candidates for the ministry in their communion all the principles which Arminius taught, have been accused of approaching gradually much nearer to Socinianism than he did.

The consent given by the British divines to the decrees of the Synod is a proof that the churches of England and of Scotland, by whom they were sent, adhered to the Calvinistic tenets, and that James I. who had joined his influence with that of the House of Orange in the convocation of the Synod, was disposed to favour that system. One of the ablest defences of the Calvinistic system of predestination is a small treatise written against Hoard, an Arminian, by Davenant, one of the deputies from England, at that time professor of divinity in Cambridge, and afterwards bishop of Salisbury. The title of his book is, *Animadversions upon a Treatise, entitled, God's Love to mankind*.

But although we seem to be warranted in considering the voice of the leading men in Britain as favourable to Calvinism, at the time of the meeting of the Synod of Dort, it was not long before events, chiefly of a political nature, occasioned a revolution upon this point in the sentiments of James, and of those members of the church of England who were attached to the cause of monarchy. The long civil war, and the memorable change of government in the seventeenth

century, arose from the political principles of men who were rigidly attached to the worship, discipline, government, and doctrine of the church of Geneva. The friends of monarchy, on the other hand, were attached to the worship, discipline, and government which the church of England had derived from the Lutheran churches: and as, in addition to these points of difference upon ecclesiastical matters, they held the political principles of the republicans in abhorrence, it was natural for them to conceive a prejudice against the theological doctrine of these republicans. They unavoidably felt a strong propensity to adopt a system of predestination by which they might be allied more closely to the Lutheran churches, with whom they had many points in common, and completely discriminated from the Calvinists, with whom they did not wish to maintain any connection. Archbishop Laud, to whom Charles I. committed the direction of the ecclesiastical affairs of Britain, wrote a small treatise in the year 1625, to prove that the articles of the church of England admit of an Arminian sense: the countenance of the court was confined to those divines who favoured the Arminian system; and although the church of England never publicly renounced Calvinism, yet it is certain that an attachment to that system of doctrine came to be the distinguishing badge of the Puritans, who derived their name from pretending to a more spiritual kind of worship than the Episcopalians, but who were known as much by the firmness with which they held the tenets of the church of Geneva, as by their abhorrence of forms.

When, in the progress of the commotions of the seventeenth century, episcopacy was voted to be useless and burdensome, an assembly of divines was held at Westminster, "for the purpose of settling the government and liturgy of the church of England, and for vindicating and clearing the doctrine of the said church from false aspersions and interpretations." What we call the Confession of Faith was composed by that assembly, as a part of the uniformity in religion which was then intended, and which it was the object of the Solemn League and Covenant to preserve between the churches in the three kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland. When presbytery was established in Scotland at the Revolution, this Confession of Faith was ratified in the Scottish parliament: it afterwards received the sanction of the treaty of Union; and it continues to be the avowed confession of the church of Scotland. But in England, when episcopacy was revived after the Restoration, the thirty-nine articles became, as formerly, the standard of that church; the Confession of Faith was of course set aside; and the former prejudices against some of its doctrines were very much confirmed in the minds of those who were attached to episcopacy and monarchy, by their abhorrence of the views and the success of those who had given orders for its being composed.

The circumstances which have been mentioned explain the manner in which Calvinism came to be regarded, by the body of the people in England, as a name nearly allied to republicanism; and no person who is acquainted with the history of the factions of that country, can entertain a doubt that political causes have contributed very largely to the disrepute in which that system has been held by many

dignified and learned members of our neighbouring church. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that several divines of that church, who were very much superior to the weakness of being led in their theological creed by an attachment to any political party, have lent the support of their erudition and abilities to some mitigated form of Arminianism. Of this kind were Barrow, Clarke, Whitby, and Jortin. There were also many wise and able men in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who endeavoured to represent the points of difference between the Arminians and Calvinists as of little importance, and who received the name of Latitudinarians, from wishing to unite all true Protestants against the approaches of Popery. Of this kind were Chillingworth, Tillotson, Cudworth, and Hoadley.

It is farther to be noticed, that there has long been a general wish in the members of the church of England, to consider themselves as not fettered to any particular system of predestination by the articles which they subscribe. Bishop Burnet declares himself to be an Arminian; and after giving in his exposition of the seventeenth article, with an impartiality more apparent than real, and with some degree of confusion, a view of the arguments upon both sides, he concludes in these words: "It is very probable that those who penned this article meant that the decree was absolute; but yet, since they have not said it, those who subscribe the articles do not seem to be bound to any thing that is not expressed in them; and, therefore, although the Calvinists have less occasion for scruple, since the article does seem more plainly to favour them, the Remonstrants may subscribe this article without renouncing their opinion as to this matter." He says, in another place, "The church has not been peremptory, but a latitude has been left to different opinions." And Dr. Jortin, in his dissertation on the controversies concerning predestination and grace, which was published in 1755, tells us how far this latitude has been used. With a partiality to his own system, and a virulence against his adversaries, which often appear to an excessive and shameful degree in his writings, he thus expresses himself: "In England, at the time of the Synod of Dort, we were much divided in our opinions concerning the controverted articles; but our divines having taken the liberty to think and judge for themselves, and the civil government not interposing, it hath come to pass that from that time to this, almost all persons here of any note for learning and abilities, have bid adieu to Calvinism, have sided with the Remonstrants, and have left the Fatalists to follow their own opinions, and to rejoice (since they can rejoice) in a religious system, consisting of human creatures without liberty, doctrines without sense, faith without reason, and a God without mercy."

Dr. Prettyman, or Tomline, bishop of Lincoln, who, in his *Elements of Christian Theology*, has given a large commentary on the 39 Articles, labours to prove that the seventeenth admits of an Arminian sense, and writes against Calvinism with the virulence of a man who does not understand it. He has also published a second work, which he calls a *Refutation of Calvinism*—a strange title for a book avowedly written by a dignitary of that church, whose founders were Calvinists, and one of whose articles, prepared by them in its

natural and obvious meaning, announces the characteristic doctrines of Calvinism. I waited with much impatience for this book: but was greatly disappointed with its contents. It contains hardly any general reasoning; it is chiefly a collection and exposition of texts, which have been often brought forward by Arminian writers; and a repetition of that abuse which they are in the habit of pouring forth upon those who differ from them. The book has already passed through many editions, and meeting the prejudices and wishes of a great body of the English clergy, is extremely popular in England. But it is by no means formidable in point of argument: and however much it may be admired by those who wish to believe the system which it professes to support, it will not shake the creed of any person well instructed in the fundamental principles of Calvinism.

While therefore the members of the church of Scotland, by subscribing the Confession of Faith, find themselves equally restrained from avowing Arminian and Arian tenets, the members of the church of England continually use that liberty which they consider as left to them, and think that they adhere to the orthodox faith of their church, when they defend the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of Atonement, although they disclaim the literal Calvinistic interpretation of the seventeenth article. Amongst the ministers of the established church of England, there are some who adopt this interpretation, and who upon that account are called doctrinal Calvinists. There are Universalists, who, without entering farther into the disputed points, consider the benefit of the death of Christ as extending to all, either by the general resurrection, or by the general offer of pardon upon easy terms; and there are others who scruple not to avow their attachment to all the parts of the Arminian doctrine.

It might be thought that in the church of Rome the infallibility of the Pope would furnish an effectual antidote against theological controversy. Yet, even in that church, the questions in dispute between the Arminians and Calvinists have never been decided; and large bodies of Roman Catholics have received distinguishing names from the tenets which they hold in relation to these questions. The church of Rome was inclined, by the whole system of its corruptions, as well as by its antipathy to the first reformers, to adhere to the Semi-Pelagian doctrine. The council of Trent was summoned in the sixteenth century, to give a decent colour to these corruptions, and to crush the Reformation. But the fear of offending the Dominicans, who held the doctrine of Augustine, restrained the council from openly avowing the Semi-Pelagian doctrine; and their decree upon this point, like many other wary decisions of that pretended oracle, is expressed with such obscurity and ambiguity, as to leave the matter undecided. The learning of the Jesuits, whose order arose about the middle of the sixteenth century, was employed, from the time of their institution, to overturn the doctrine of the reformers; and the term *scientia media*, invented by Molina, and introduced in the year 1588 into the controversy concerning predestination, was generally adopted by his brethren. The Jesuits were in this manner opposed to the Dominicans; and the controversy has been the occasion of many distractions and convulsions in the church of Rome, which the autho-

rity of succeeding Popes has been unable to suppress, and which their wisdom has not found an expedient method of healing. The Dominicans received, about the middle of the seventeenth century, very powerful aid from Jansenius, who, in a book entitled *Augustinus*, gave a full and faithful picture of the sentiments of Augustine, upon the corruption of human nature, predestination, and divine aid. This exhibition of the sentiments of Augustine demonstrated, that the Jesuits, the most zealous supporters of a church which professes the highest veneration for that father, had, upon these subjects, departed very far from his doctrine. The Jesuits, who saw that their credit was in danger of being shaken by this discovery, exerted their influence at different times, in procuring from the Popes a condemnation of the book of Jansenius. His followers have often endured persecution; and the boasted unity of the Roman church was interrupted, both in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by the bitterest contests between those who, from adhering to the interpretation which Molina gave of this intricate subject, were known by the name of Molinists, and those who, having received the knowledge of the doctrine of Augustine from the book of Jansenius, are called Jansenists.

The private passions which mingled their influences with the controversies relating to predestination, either in the Roman or in the Protestant church, are of no importance to a fair inquirer after truth. But it is impossible to look back upon the various forms of agitating the same questions which have presented themselves to us in this short review, without perceiving, that however strongly the human mind is disposed to inquire into the subject, there is much intricacy in the questions connected with it, and little probability of arriving at those clear and short conclusions which may prevent future dispute.

Hence, upon this subject, as upon the subject of the Trinity, there are two very important lessons that naturally result from all our researches, which I may be allowed to take this opportunity of impressing upon the minds of my students. The first lesson is, that they should beware of engaging the people to whom they may be called to discourse, in those thorny speculations from which they may find it impossible to disentangle themselves, and where the incapacity of perceiving the truth may engender errors very hurtful to their comfort and their virtue. The secret will of God appears, from the very nature of the expression, to form no part of the business of preaching. Our commission is to declare to the people his revealed will: and although it may often be impossible for us to explain particular passages of Scripture, or to treat of some of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, without a reference to the doctrine of predestination; yet care ought to be taken to present only those clear, unembarrassed views of that doctrine which naturally connect with practice, never to amuse the people with an account of the abuses of the doctrine, but to say what we judge proper to say of it in such a manner as to be assured that they shall learn no such abuse from us; and to endeavour, above all things, to leave upon their minds a strong impression of these most important truths, that however certain the doctrine of predestination is in general, the only certainty which any individual can attain of his predestination is inseparably joined with the distinguished exer-

cise of every Christian grace ; and that all the hearers of the gospel are required, both by the nature of the thing, and by the constant tenor of Scripture, to try themselves, whether they are in the number of the elect, by the fruits of their election.

The second lesson which naturally results from our researches upon this subject is, that men of speculation should exercise mutual forbearance. It is not a matter of surprise, that persons of the most enlightened minds should now differ upon points which have divided the opinions of mankind ever since they began to speculate. It is not to be supposed that all the consequences which may be shown to flow from any system are held by every one who defends that system ; for he may either not see that the consequences arise, or he may find some method of evading them. The Calvinists are not answerable for the various abuses of their doctrine which gave birth to the Fanatics and Antinomians of different ages ; for they are able to show that in all these abuses their doctrine is perverted. Nor are the Arminians to be charged with those unworthy conceptions of the Deity which to many appear inseparable from their system ; for they mean to place the justice and goodness of God in the most honourable light ; and it appears to them that they err on the safe side, and that they derive a sufficient excuse from the sublimity of the subject, and the weakness of our faculties, if, in their zeal to maintain the honour of the moral attributes of the Deity, they seem to derogate from his sovereignty and independence.

While our researches upon this subject suggest these two lessons, there are also two rules to be observed in reading upon this controversy, which are rendered necessary by the manner of its being handled in former times. The first is, not to form an opinion of either system from the writings of those who oppose it, but to do both sides the justice of considering what they say for themselves. The Arminians and the Calvinists are very much upon a footing in respect of the foul abuse which they have poured upon one another. But it should always be remembered, and, as far as my observation goes, it is a rule which you may safely follow in reading upon every subject, that from whomsoever abuse proceeds, it deserves to be treated with equal contempt ; that if it is not a sure mark of the weakness of the reasoning with which it is connected, it certainly does not make the reasoning stronger ; and that every candid reader sets aside all the expressions of mutual reproach, which find a place in the discussion of any question, as of no avail to the argument.

The second rule which is necessary in reading upon this controversy, is not to think yourselves obliged to defend every position of those writers whose general system you approve, or every view of the subject which they may have presented, and to beware of conceiving any prejudice against the truth, because you find it impossible to adopt all that has been said by the friends of the truth. It has happened that many Calvinists in former times, with gloomy notions of the Deity, with a slender knowledge of philosophy, and with much animosity against their adversaries, have exhibited their system in a dress very little fitted to recommend it to the world : and it is common with Arminian writers to give a picture of that system in a number of the most exceptionable passages quoted from books of those

times. This is an art very likely to succeed with men who have not leisure or capacity to inquire: and I have no doubt that the disrespectful terms in which Calvinism is often mentioned by many shallow thinkers, and even by some respectable clergymen in the church of England, arises entirely from their having read such quotations, and perhaps little more, upon the subject.

Although the style of writing upon this controversy, which occurs in many books, renders these rules necessary, it is our happiness to live in a more enlightened and polished age, when the asperity of former times is universally condemned, when the views of men are very much enlarged, and when Calvinism has formed an alliance with philosophy. The celebrated metaphysician Leibnitz, who flourished in the beginning of the eighteenth century, although a member of the Lutheran church, illustrated and established the doctrine of philosophical necessity, or the perfect consistency of the freedom of a moral agent with the infallible determination of his conduct, which is the foundation of Calvinism. There is a small book of his entitled, "*Essais de Theodicée, sur la bonté de Dieu, la liberté de l'homme, et l'origine du mal,*" which contains almost all the principles upon which I have rested the defence of the Calvinistic tenets. Wolfius trod in the steps of Leibnitz. Canzius published a book, entitled "*Philosophiæ Leibnitianæ et Wolfianæ usus in Theologiâ per præcipua fidei capita;*" and several systems of theology, written in the course of the eighteenth century, by divines of the Reformed churches on the continent, as Wyttenbach, and Stapfer, and by Edwards in America, have applied the philosophy of Leibnitz and Wolfius to explain and vindicate the doctrines of Calvin. These doctrines, instead of appearing liable to that charge of absurdity, which the Arminian writers in all times, and even in the present day, have not scrupled in opprobrious terms to advance, now assume a rational and philosophical form, and appear to be a consistent whole, arising out of a few leading ideas followed out to their consequences: while the Arminians appear to be only half-thinkers, who stop short before they arrive at the conclusion; and although they will not, like the Socinians, deny the principles, yet refuse to follow the Calvinists in making the application of them.

I have no difficulty in concluding the subject, which has engaged our attention for so long a time, by declaring it to be my conviction that the Calvinistic system is the most philosophical. The Arminians indeed have often boasted that all the men of learning and genius are on their side, and that those only who choose to walk in trammels adhere to Calvinism. But there is reason to think that the progress of philosophy will gradually produce a revolution in the minds of men; that those opinions concerning the nature of human liberty, and the extent of the providence of God, from which the Calvinistic system is easily deduced, although they have not received the countenance of Dr. Reid in his essays on the active powers, will, even in opposition to his respectable name, find a place in every system of pneumatics; and that there will thus be diffused amongst calm inquirers a more general impression that the doctrine of the first reformers, with regard to predestination, admits of a better defence than it received from them. It gives me particular satisfaction to

observe, that the late Dr. Horsley, bishop of St. Asaph, one of the profoundest scholars that ever adorned the church of England, although he has not adopted all the Calvinistic tenets, has laid down in the most precise and satisfactory manner, those principles from which all the tenets of Calvin that we are obliged to hold appear to me readily to flow. In a sermon upon providence and free agency, he has declared his conviction with regard to the certain influence of motives as final causes, in reference to which the mind puts forth its powers, and as the means by which God governs the intelligent creation; and also with regard to the infallible predetermination of those events which the Almighty in this manner accomplishes. The friends of Calvinism require nothing more. We may reject every tenet which does not result from these principles; and we may solace ourselves under the scorn of many superficial writers in the church of England who condemn what they do not understand, with the countenance of this respectable auxiliary, who, without declaring himself a partisan, has lent his assistance in clearing that strong ground which every sound and able Calvinist will now occupy.

BOOK V.

INDEX OF PARTICULAR QUESTIONS ARISING OUT OF OPINIONS CONCERNING THE GOSPEL REMEDY, AND OF MANY OF THE TECHNICAL TERMS IN THEOLOGY.

THE fifth book is the conclusion of that part of my course which is properly theological, and means to present a short view of many particular questions which have arisen out of the general principles, and of the technical terms, which, having occurred in discussing these questions, now form a part of the language of theology. Some of the questions turn upon the Nature of the Remedy; much the greater part upon the Extent and the Application of it. But none of them will require to be handled with any detail; for the length to which they are spread out in ordinary systems is only a repetition under different forms of the same principles. My object is simply to furnish you with an index of the questions to which they have been applied, and a vocabulary of the language, which has acquired a currency amongst the writers upon that science which you profess to study.

CHAPTER I.

REGENERATION—CONVERSION—FAITH.

To men considered as sinners, *i. e.* both guilty and corrupt, the gospel brings a remedy. The remedy is of saving benefit only to those by whom it is embraced. It cannot be embraced unless it be known; but it is made known to all to whom the gospel is published; and the intimation given by publishing it, together with the invitation and the command to embrace it which always accompanies the intimation, has received, according to an expression frequent in the

Epistles, the name of a call. "God hath called you by our gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. ii. 14.

The Arminians admit no other call but that which is common to all who live in a Christian country, and which is obeyed or rejected according to the disposition of the person who receives it. But the Calvinists are led by their principles to make a distinction between external and effectual calling, in support of which they quote these words of our Lord,—“Many are called, but few are chosen.” The external call, which is addressed to all who live in a Christian country, carries along with it such evidences of the divine original of the gospel, so striking an exhibition of the love of God to mankind, and so strong an obligation upon every reasonable being to attend, that it aggravates the condemnation of those by whom it is rejected. But finding men alienated from the life of God, corrupted in their understandings, their will, and their affections, it has not the effect of inducing them to embrace the remedy, unless it be accompanied by the operations of the Spirit of God. These operations, in their full extent, are peculiar to the elect for whom they were purchased, and to whom they are applied through the mediation of Christ; and therefore to them only the external call becomes effectual; in other words, they only accept the invitation, and obey the command given them by that call. The call is rendered effectual with regard to them by the removal of that corruption which renders it ineffectual with regard to others;—by a change of character, which, in respect of the understanding, is such an illumination as qualifies them for receiving knowledge; in respect of the will, is an influence so powerful as effectually inclines them to follow the inducements that are proposed in the word of God; and in respect of the whole soul, produces a refinement and elevation by which the affections are determined to the worthiest objects. This introduction of the principles of a new life, into those who are considered as spiritually dead, is called, in conformity to Scripture language, regeneration.* It is also called conversion, a turning men from that state of mind and those habits of life, which enter into our view when we speak of human nature as corrupt, to those sentiments and habits which proceed from the Spirit of God.† And it is evident that when a man is thus converted, all the obstacles to his accepting the invitation in the gospel cease to exist, and the remedy there provided, approving itself to his understanding and his heart, is cordially embraced.

Infinite is the number of questions which have been agitated in different periods concerning the manner of this conversion. But as there are two extremes in the opinions upon this subject, in the middle between which the Calvinistic system professes to lie, it is easy, without entering into any detail as to the shades of difference that distinguish particular opinions, to apprehend the leading principles of those who lean to either extreme, and to perceive the caution with which the Calvinists keep clear of both. Upon the one side are the Pelagians, the Semi-Pelagians, and all those who, under whatever

* John iii. 3, 5. 2 Cor. v. 17. Ephes. iv. 22, 23, 24.

† Matth. xviii. 3. Acts iii. 19; xv. 3. 1 Thess. i. 9.

name, and with whatever modifications, hold what has been called the Synergistical system. That system derives its name from representing man as co-operating with God in his conversion, and the efficacy of the grace of God as depending upon that co-operation. The Calvinistic system is directly opposed to this extreme; and the principles which have been illustrated afford an answer to all the forms which the Synergistical doctrine can assume. Upon the other side lie all the degrees and shades of the ancient mystical theology, which is now better known by the name of fanaticism. The character of that theology, and the manner of discriminating Calvinism from an extreme to which it seems to approach, are now to be illustrated.

The mystical spirit appeared very early in the Christian church. Its origin is to be traced not so much to the peculiar doctrines of the gospel, as to the alliance which our religion very early formed with the Platonic philosophy. Plato held that the soul of man is an emanation from the Supreme Mind, at present imprisoned in the body, detained by its connection with matter, from holding communion with the Father of spirits, and exposed by the contamination of surrounding objects to the danger of being disqualified for returning to its original. He taught, therefore, that it is the duty of man by meditation and retirement, to disentangle himself from his present fetters, and to prepare his soul, by a gradual emancipation, for the freer and happier life which awaits it after it is raised above every thing terrestrial. This principle, when applied with those qualifications and restrictions that are rendered necessary by the active engagements of life, lays the foundation of magnanimity, of sentimental devotion, and of many exercises which contribute in a high degree to the purification of the mind. But the principle is easily corrupted, and produces in men of warm imaginations, of constitutional indolence, or of feeble spirits, a variety of abuse, hurtful both to society and to the character of the individual. It was adopted in the third century by Origen, a zealous disciple of the Platonic school. Finding a ready admission with many learned Christians who had been educated in that school, and being diffused by the credit of Origen's writings through a great part of the Christian world, it early began to produce those corruptions, which, under different names, and with very different effects, have continued from that time to the present day.

From this Platonic principle, incorporated with the doctrines of the gospel, proceeded the whole race of hermits and monks, who, beginning with Paul the hermit in the third century, spread over all parts of Christendom, and have left traces of their existence in every land. Some lived in solitude; others in small societies; but all professed, by a life of abstemiousness, mortification and penance, to raise their souls to a more intimate communion with the Deity than is granted to ordinary men. From the same principle proceeded the pretences to immediate inspiration, assumed by men, who, continuing to live in the world, were conceived to be in this manner exalted above their neighbours, as the favourites of heaven.

It is the province of ecclesiastical history to mark the shades of difference between the philosophy of the ancient Mystics, the pretended theurgy or magic of the followers of Paracelsus, the bloody, turbulent, levelling spirit which appeared in Germany at the time of

the Reformation, the peaceful submissive spirit of the Quakers, who arose in the seventeenth century, the presumptuous familiarity in the language and tenets of Antonia Bourignon, against which our church guards her ministers under the name of Bourignonism, and the blasphemous incomprehensible jargon of Jacob Behmen. Whatever were their points of difference, they all agreed in the general character of fanaticism, the pretending to such an immediate communication with the Deity as furnished an inward light, to the guidance of which they resigned themselves.

Some fanatics have approached so near to deistical principles, as to believe that there is an inward light common to all men, and sufficient, without any extraordinary revelation, to bring those who follow it to eternal life. Others, among whom is the celebrated Barclay, the author of the apology for the Quakers, treading in the steps of the advocates for universal redemption, consider this inward light as one of the benefits of the gospel, procured for mankind by the interposition of Jesus Christ, but extending to all in every country, whether they have heard of the gospel or not, and given with equal liberality to every man to be excited and improved by his own endeavours. And there are fanatics, who, adhering to the Calvinistic ideas, with regard to the extent of the remedy, consider this inward light as peculiar to the elect. The ancient mystics, who had learned in the Platonic school to regard the Son as the reason and wisdom of the Father, and to call him by the names, $\phi\omega\varsigma$, $\sigma\omicron\phi\iota\alpha$, considered the inward light vouchsafed to men as a portion of this reason or wisdom, an emanation from Christ the true light; and many modern fanatics, retaining this idea, although ignorant of the philosophical language from which it arose, and applying it to the Scripture phrases, "Christ dwelling in us, Christ formed in us," are accustomed to call the inward light to which they pretend, the hidden Christ, or the Christ within: while other fanatics, who, with the generality of Christians, regard the Holy Ghost as a distinct person, the fountain and distributor of spiritual influences, mean by the inward light the operation of the Spirit upon the mind. But whether the inward light be conceived as proceeding from the action of the Spirit or the inhabitation of the Son,—whether it be conceived as the portion of all men, or as peculiar to the favourites of heaven, this is the general character of what we call fanaticism, that the inward light is understood to be a perfect guide to those who enjoy it, and the only guide which they are obliged to follow. Religion, with them, consists entirely of feeling, an inexpressible delight, which supersedes or renders in a great measure insignificant, every thing external. It appears to them of little importance whether the understanding be informed, provided the heart be touched. They are more solicitous about the allegorical sense which the Scriptures may receive, than about the facts or reasonings contained in them. They consider Christ without, or the facts recorded in the history of his life, and the precepts delivered in his own discourses and the writings of his apostles, as furnishing a directory of a very inferior kind to Christ within them. They undervalue the ordinances of religion; they think it better patiently to wait for the illapse of the Spirit than to make any exertion of their own; and they rank the most punctual performance of the great duties of justice

and benevolence very far below certain sentiments and emotions, by which they consider the Deity as manifesting himself to their souls, as vouchsafing of his special love a revelation not granted to other men, and as maintaining that communion with them by which they are effectually called, separated from sinners, and made partakers of a divine nature.

This is fanaticism, the distinguishing feature of some societies, both of ancient and of modern date, and some tincture of which may often be met with among those who belong to the established church. It is a very dangerous spirit, because it tends to substitute, in place of that clear, precise rule, which the word of God delivers to all, something which is undefined and unknown, something which, depending in a great measure upon bodily constitution, is very much what every man chooses to make it. It tends to beget presumption in men of warm imaginations, and the deepest despair in persons of feeble spirits and of constitutional melancholy. It nourishes arrogance, and a contempt of others; and it has often relaxed the obligations of morality, by holding forth an ideal perfection, a spiritual communion, an approach of the soul to God, as better than the calm and uniform performance of those things which are good and profitable to men.

It is of very great importance that those, who declare their assent to the Calvinistic system, and who are bound to make that system the rule of their public teaching, should not confound it with fanaticism, but should perceive the clear and strong line by which the two are discriminated. Calvinism adopts as one of its fundamental principles an immediate action of God upon the soul, and in this respect it appears to agree with fanaticism. But the distinction is this; that immediate action of God, upon which Calvinism proceeds, is such an action as restores the whole nature of man; not merely exciting sentiments and emotions, but conveying light to his understanding, invigorating his powers of action, and calling forth into exercise all those principles which unite in forming the constitution of a reasonable and moral agent. This action is conceived to be so entirely the work of God, as to admit, at the time of its being first exerted, of no co-operation from the being whose nature is restored; and hence the Calvinistic system stands in direct opposition to the Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian doctrine. But the very purpose of the action is to give the being who is restored the capacity of co-operating in the production of an end; and that end is accomplished by various means which are exhibited, that they may operate upon him according to the laws of his nature, and by various exertions which, being the effect of the restoration of his faculties through the grace imparted to him, have no worth or value except what they derive from that grace, but still are as much his own exertions, as if they had been performed by the original unassisted powers of his nature. In this kind of action there is no danger of delusion; no disjunction of emotion from knowledge, for the heart is addressed through the understanding; no encouragement to undervalue the word of God and the ordinances of religion, for these are the means by which the Spirit operates; no temptation to neglect the duties of morality, for these are the fruits of the Spirit. And thus Calvinism is manifestly discriminated from fanaticism, by

the nature and the effects of that action which it represents the Father of Spirits as exerting upon the soul.

It is readily admitted by the Calvinists, that God may act upon the mind of man in what manner he pleases ; and the account which they give of the conversion of those who are elected, but who by their situation are excluded from the outward means of conversion, discovers that, in their opinion, the sovereignty of divine grace is unlimited. For as they hold that God, who in the ordinary course of his providence makes use of means, is free to work without, above, and against them at his pleasure ; so they hold also that elect infants, and other elect persons who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the word, “are regenerated by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth.” But while the Calvinists, according to their own principles, consider the Almighty as in no respect restrained by the means which he himself has appointed, they consider the use of outward means as the ordinary course of his procedure in converting those who are within their reach, as appointed with wisdom, and as deriving from his appointment an authority which renders it unwarrantable and presumptuous in any person to set up a private rule in preference to them. Accordingly, our Confession of Faith declares that nothing is, at any time, to be added to the Scriptures, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men ; and that the Supreme Judge, by which all private spirits, all pretences to inward illumination, are to be examined, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures.*

When we attend to the general strain of Scripture, to which we are directed as the Judge by which all private spirits are to be examined, we find it opposite to fanaticism. In Scripture the words of truth and soberness are delivered ; facts are related with minuteness ; evidence is distinctly proposed ; knowledge is conveyed to the understanding ; ordinances are appointed for the benefit of all ; precepts are given for the direction of all ; and men are conducted as rational beings, by the exercise of their own powers, to that temper of mind and those actions which are connected with salvation.

The general strain of Scripture is so opposite to fanaticism, that it appears at first sight to favour the Pelagian or Semi-Pelagian doctrine. We meet everywhere with commands, as if the being addressed were able to obey them ; with counsels, as if nothing more than moral suasion were necessary to overcome his unwillingness ; with various expressions of the connexion between his duty and his happiness, as if his everlasting condition depended upon his own exertions. These conclusions indeed are soon found to be too hasty, because we meet also with descriptions of his condition, which imply that he is of himself unable to do anything, and with promises of a supernatural influence, which is represented as the only sufficient cause of his conversion. But we must not, in our zeal against Pelagianism, allow these descriptions and promises to drive us into fanaticism, for then we render the commands, the counsels, and the promises un-

* Confession of Faith, i. 6, 10.

meaning. The true medium between the two extremes is that which the Calvinists endeavour to hold, when they consider a man who is regenerated by the grace of God, as restored to the full possession and the renewed exercise of all his faculties, to a state in which truth illuminates his mind, the influence of moral inducements is felt, the exercises of devotion conspire with education and moral discipline in refining his character, the worthiest objects engage his affections, the most honourable and useful employments fill up his time, and he is led, in a manner corresponding with his reasonable nature and with the condition assigned him in this world, to that happiness which is prepared for him in another.

The views which have been given are the best preservative against that spirit which we call fanaticism. For according to these views, that cordial acceptance of the gospel remedy, which is known in theological language by the name of faith, although the fruit of the operation of the Holy Spirit, is attained by the same rational procedure as any other abiding sentiment. The word of God, the ordinances of religion, the opportunities of information and improvement, habits of attention and docility, the dispositions of a good and honest heart, and the virtues of an active life, all have their proper value, and conspire in their place, under the direction of the Spirit of God from whom they proceed, to the effectual application of that remedy which his love has provided.

According to the Calvinistic system, the faith which is produced by the action of God upon the soul, is not a sudden impulse, a solitary act, a transient emotion, but a habit or permanent state of mind, proceeding upon many previous acts, and embracing many kindred dispositions. As it implies an exercise of the understanding illuminated by the Spirit of God, it supposes previous knowledge; a knowledge of the facts which constitute the history of our religion, of the arguments which constitute the evidence of it, of the doctrines and precepts which constitute the substance of it. Hence arises the propriety of that instruction continually addressed by the reading and preaching of the word to those in whom faith may be produced. Hence we condemn both the blind implicit faith, which the church of Rome requires by human authority from those whom she studies to keep in ignorance; and also that contempt of knowledge, and that entire dependence upon present emotions which are the characters of fanaticism. And in thus representing faith as a rational act, we follow the direction of our Lord, who commands Christians to "search the Scriptures;"* and the direction of Peter, who exhorts them to "be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh a reason of the hope that is in them."†

On the other hand, it appears from what has been stated, that a knowledge of the facts of our religion, and an assent upon evidence to its truth, is not the whole of faith. For the gospel does not contain general propositions, which may be supposed to find at all times a ready admission into a speculative mind, and concerning which nothing more is required than to perceive that they are true; but its peculiar character being this, that it brings a remedy for the present

* John v. 39.

† 1 Pet. iii. 15.

state of moral evil, the mind, according to the view of human nature upon which the Calvinistic system proceeds, is not disposed to accept of the remedy until a change upon the will and the affections be produced by the Spirit of God. Hence faith stands opposed to that love of sin which produces an aversion to the remedy, to that love of the world which produces an indifference about it, to that pride and self-confidence which make it appear unnecessary; and faith implies what our Lord calls “a good and honest heart,” humbleness of mind, poverty of spirit, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, all those moral dispositions, which lead us with cordiality and thankfulness to embrace that method of being delivered from the evils of sin which the gospel reveals. Hence arises the propriety of the many exhortations to faith which the Scriptures contain, and which the preaching of the word continually enforces; hence, too, the propriety of representing faith in Christ as a duty, for the neglect of which men are justly condemned, while in other places it is called the gift of God. For as the exhortations to faith are one of the instruments employed in producing that change out of which it arises, so the want of those moral dispositions with which it is connected is a proof of that depravity of mind, which, from whatever cause it proceeds, is, to every intelligent being who observes it, an object of the highest moral disapprobation.

As the Greek word rendered faith, *πιστις*, is a general term, denoting in its primary meaning persuasion, or credit given to testimony, and admitting of various applications, it is not always used in Scripture in that precise and full sense which has now been stated. Divines are accustomed to enumerate four kinds of faith. The faith of miracles, or that persuasion of the power of their master, and that immediate impulse which enabled many of the first Christians to perform, in his name, works far exceeding human strength; a kind of faith, which is expressly declared in Scripture to have no natural connexion with moral qualifications, and to give no assurance of salvation. “Though I have all faith,” says Paul, “so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.”* Historical faith, or the assent given to truths, the evidence of which the understanding is unable to resist. So it is said, that “the devils believe and tremble;”† and it is conceived that a man may be able to give the most distinct exposition of the arguments for Christianity, and the most satisfying solution of every objection, while in his will and affections he is an enemy to the cross of Christ. Temporary faith, or those emotions of admiration, joy, and gratitude, and those purposes of obedience which are excited by the counsels or promises of Scripture, or by particular exhibitions of the grace of the gospel. Of this kind is the faith described by our Lord in one part of his exposition of the parable of the sower; the faith of many who followed him, of whom it is said at some times that they believed, although their conduct discovers that they retained all their evil passions: and the faith of a great part of the hearers of the gospel, who are not wholly unmoved by the calls which they receive, because the sentiments of human nature are not obliterated from their breasts, and yet upon whose conduct these calls do not appear to have

* 1 Cor. xiii. v.

† James ii. 19.

any abiding influence. Saving faith, which is considered by the Arminians as distinguished from temporary faith only by its duration. Faith, according to their system, originates in the favourable reception which the mind gives to the grace of God. When it is lost by a change upon the character of him in whom it was begun, it appears to be temporary; when it continues during the whole of his life, it appears to be saving. But the Calvinists are led by their principles to consider saving faith as of a different species from that which is temporary; as originating in the operation of the Spirit of God upon those in whom he carries his purpose into execution; as a principle which cannot be lost, and whose fruit endures to everlasting life. As it presupposes knowledge and assent to the revelation of the gospel, it has a respect to all the parts of that revelation; and as it implies a firm reliance upon the promises of God in general, it has a special regard to that declaration which is characteristic of the gospel, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. "This saying," every one that believeth in Christ to the saving of his soul accounts "faithful," *i. e.* deserving credit, "and worthy of all acceptance." *i. e.* deserving to be cordially and thankfully embraced. The acceptance of this saying has been often expressed by the following phrases, all of which derive some countenance from Scripture; resting upon Christ, laying hold of him, flying for refuge to him, coming to him, trusting in him, receiving him. From the poverty of language, all these expressions are figurative, and consequently liable to abuse. But provided the figure contained in them be not tortured, and provided it be always remembered in the use of them that faith in Christ does not omit any part of the revelation concerning him, but embraces his whole character, they may serve to mark with significancy and precision that state of mind, and those sentiments which are the first fruit of the operation of the Spirit of God in the conversion of a sinner.

CHAPTER II.

JUSTIFICATION.

UPON the condition of those in whom the operation of the Spirit produces saving faith, there is a change which in Scripture is called justification; and that notion of justification by faith which arises out of the Catholic opinion concerning the nature of the remedy, and the Calvinistic tenets concerning the extent and the application of it, may be thus shortly stated.

The sufferings of the Lord Jesus were endured in the stead of those whom God from eternity decreed to bring to salvation; their sins were imputed to him as their substitute, and he bore them in his body on the tree. In all that he suffered and did there was a merit, which the apostle, Rom. v. 18. calls *ἐν δικαίωμα*, one righteousness, and upon account of which he says, 1 Cor. i. 30, *Χριστός ἐγενήθη ἡμῖν δικαιοσύνη*. When those for whom Christ suffered believe on him, this righteousness is imputed to them, *i. e.* counted as theirs in the judgment of God. Considered in themselves they are guilty and deserve to suffer, but by means of the imputation of this righteousness they are completely acquitted from the punishment due to their sins, because it was endured for them by the Lord Jesus, and they acquire a right to eternal life, because it was purchased for them by his obedience. According to the notion now stated justification is purely a forensic act, *i. e.* the act of a judge sitting in the forum, the place of judgment, in which the supreme ruler and judge, who is accountable to none, and who alone knows the manner in which the ends of his universal government can best be attained, reckons that which was done by the substitute in the same manner as if it had been done by those who believe in the substitute; and not upon account of any thing done by them, but purely upon account of this gracious method of reckoning, grants them the full remission of their sins. In this forensic sense of the word we understand the apostle to say, Rom. iii. 26, that God is “the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus; and Rom. iv. 5, that “to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,” or as in the 6th verse, “God imputeth,” reckoneth to him, “righteousness without works.”

This is the great doctrine of justification by faith, which was preached by all the first reformers, which they thought they derived from Scripture, and which they opposed with zeal and with success to the following tenets of the church of Rome, upon which a great part of the corruptions of that church appeared to them to rest.

In the doctrine of the church of Rome justification was considered not as a forensic act, altering the condition of those who believe, but

as an infusion of righteousness into their souls, making them internally and personally just. It was in this way equivalent to what we call sanctification ; and two things, which we consider as connected by an indissoluble bond, yet as totally distinct from one another, were confounded. By this confusion the remission of sins was understood to comprehend taking away the stain as well as the guilt of sin ; and the merit of the sufferings and obedience of Christ was, in this sense, understood to be imputed or communicated to those who believe that by the merciful appointment of God, it procured that grace which renewed their hearts and made them conformable to the image of Christ ; so that his righteousness was only the remote cause of their acceptance with God, but the immediate cause was their personal righteousness, or that likeness to him which is obtained through his mediation.

Further, while the reformers considered all sins that were past as completely forgiven upon account of the satisfaction of Christ, the church of Rome, which considered remission as grounded upon a removal of the pollution of sin, thought that a part of the punishment remains to be endured by the sinner ; that the satisfaction of Christ, which alone is sufficient to deliver from future and eternal punishment those who are justified, is applied to their souls and rendered effectual for that purpose by the calamities which God sends them in this life, by the penances to which they submit, or by the torments endured in that intermediate state, where they are supposed to undergo a purification before they enter into heaven. All acts of mortification and every kind of affliction were thus regarded as a satisfaction offered on our part to the justice of God, deriving indeed all its acceptableness in the sight of God from what Christ has done, but concurring with the merits of Christ in our justification.

From the place assigned to personal righteousness, and to personal suffering in our justification, flowed the grossest corruptions in the church of Rome. The first reformers, therefore, regarding these corruptions with indignation, wisely and boldly attacked them in their principle, by dwelling upon the doctrine of justification by faith. According to this doctrine, the righteousness of Christ is the only impulsive or meritorious cause of our being justified with God ; faith is only the instrument by which this righteousness is applied to us so as to be counted as ours ; and the effect of this imputation is a complete remission of the punishment, as well as of the guilt, of sin ; so that all the calamities, which they who are justified may be called to suffer, are fatherly chastisements, expressions of love, a salutary discipline ministering to their improvement, but in no respect a punishment or a satisfaction for sin.

Many of the sects into which the Protestants were afterwards divided, not being called immediately to combat the errors of popery, did not see the necessity of adhering to all the parts of this doctrine of the first reformers, and were led by the general principles of the systems which they adopted to depart from it more or less. The Socinians, who consider the gospel merely as a declaration of the mercy of God, a lesson of righteousness, and a promise of eternal life, exclude the satisfaction of Christ altogether ; and finding no necessity and no place for the imputation of his righteousness, they

hold that, as all who repent are forgiven, so Christians are said to be justified by faith, or a reliance upon the promise which God has made to them through Christ, because this faith is the principle of that evangelical obedience which, through the essential goodness of God, will be crowned with eternal life. The Arminians, who retain the doctrine of the atonement, admit that the righteousness of Christ imputed to us is the only meritorious cause of our justification. But as this righteousness is imputed only to those who believe, and as faith, according to the Arminians, is the fruit of that favourable reception which the mind of him who believes is naturally disposed to give to the grace of God, faith is considered by them not merely as an instrument by which the righteousness of Christ is applied, but as an act implying the possession of that honesty of heart, and those good dispositions which, for the sake of Christ, are counted to us as righteousness. The Roman Catholics and the Arminians in this point agree; both ascribing to faith, not the merit of our justification, but that intrinsic value which is a preparation and predisposition for our being justified. They said, in the language of the schools, *fidem justificare dispositivæ*; that a man, by having faith, *sux voluntatis motu præparari et disponi ad justificationis gratiam consequendam*. The Calvinists, on the other hand, considering all those dispositions, which go along with faith, as originating in the grace which is conferred by God, do not ascribe to them any co-operation with that grace in the act of justification; but as they read in Scripture that we are justified not *δια την πιστιν*, but *δια πιστεως, ex πιστεως*, so they say that faith justifies *organice, instrumentaliter*; and it appears to them that the very reason why our justification is ascribed to faith, and not to other Christian virtues, is, that while obedience, charity, and repentance, have an intrinsic merit, something independent of any object foreign to themselves, which might be regarded as the ground of our acceptance, faith in Christ, by its very nature, looks beyond itself, and instead of presenting any thing of which the person who believes can boast, implies a reliance upon the merit of another; and this they understand to be the meaning of that expression of the Apostle, Rom. iv. 16, "It is of faith, that it might be by grace."

In the first paragraph of the eleventh chapter of the Confession of Faith, the doctrine of justification by faith is anxiously discriminated from all the errors which I have enumerated. And in the fourth paragraph of that chapter there is an allusion to an inaccurate expression which occurs in the writings of some who held this doctrine. They said that men were justified from eternity; thus confounding the decree of election, which entered into the eternal counsels of the Almighty, with that part of the execution of the decree which we mean by the act of justification; an act which pre-supposes that faith which is the fruit of the Spirit, and therefore does not take place until faith be produced.

There is another mode of expression which is not a mere inaccuracy, but proceeds upon a different view of the whole subject. It is said by the Roman Catholics, and by many Protestants, that no man is completely justified until the last day, when he is delivered from all the effects of sin, and put in possession of eternal life. But as the Scripture often speaks of men being justified prior to that day, a dis-

tion is made between first and second justification. The Roman Catholics mean by first justification, the infusion of personal righteousness by the Spirit of God into the soul: by second justification, the reward conferred at the last day upon the good works which flowed from this infusion. Among the Protestants the distinction between first and second justification was mentioned by some of the followers of Socinus, and has been ably and fully elucidated in a long essay prefixed to Taylor's Commentary on the Epistle of the Romans, entitled, *A Key to the Apostolic Writings*. By first justification Taylor understands the admission of the Gentile nations by the publication of the Gospel into the church of God, in which they receive the promise of pardon through the blood of Christ, the hope of eternal life, and all the privileges which belong to the people of God: by second, or final justification, he understands our being actually qualified for, and put in possession of eternal life, after we have duly improved our first justification, or Christian privileges, by a patient continuance in well-doing to the end. According to this distinction, which is generally adopted by those members of the church of England who lean to Arminianism, justification is divided into two parts, the one of which is an act of grace common to all that hear the Gospel, and the other is an exercise of distributive justice at the last day: as the connection between the two parts is so far from being infallible, that it depends entirely upon the exercise of our free will, and is dissolved with regard to many by their abuse of those privileges which others improve. But the Calvinists consider themselves as warranted by the whole strain of Scripture, to hold that the complete remission of all his past sins, implied in the justification of a sinner, is accompanied with a security that, by the same grace through which he was justified, he shall finally be saved. In the Calvinistic scheme, therefore, justification does not consist of two parts that may be disjoined, but is one act of God peculiar to the elect, which extends its benefits through the whole time of their abode upon earth, and is the ground of eternal life being adjudged to them at the last day.

To the implicit faith required in the church of Rome, and to the delusions of fanaticism, we have opposed this principle, that knowledge is essential to the faith by which we are justified. From this principle it follows, that none can be saved to whom the knowledge of Christ is not conveyed: and hence a question occurs concerning those men whose names are often mentioned in Scripture with honour, but who lived before our Saviour was born. We can have no doubt that they pleased God upon earth, and that they now dwell with him in heaven: but it is asked whether they had the means of attaining that knowledge, without which men cannot be justified by faith in Christ. The Socinians, who depreciate the services, the promises, and the precepts of the Old Testament, that they may find a marked superiority in the Gospel, without having recourse to the doctrine of atonement, consider the saints under the Old Testament as possessing advantages very little superior to those which good men enjoy under any other dispensation, as oppressed with a burdensome ritual, which did not appear to them to have any spiritual meaning, as having no encouragement to regard as their Saviour that prophet

whom their sacred books foretold, and as attaining to eternal life, not through faith in him, but merely through the goodness of God. As the harmony of the divine works leads us to expect an intimate connexion between the two dispensations of religion, it may be presumed *a priori*, that there is some defect in this view of the condition of these men: and as, in various departments of the study of theology, there are striking analogies between the preparatory dispensation and that which was its completion, it can hardly be supposed that that method of deliverance from sin, which constitutes the character of the latter, was wholly unknown to those who were distinguished from the rest of the world by living under the former. It is true that neither the moral, nor the ceremonial, nor the judicial law, was of itself sufficient to lay a foundation for faith in Christ. But it is to be remembered that the dispensation, which embraced these three parts, was given to the posterity of that patriarch in whose family the promise of a deliverer was to descend; that it intervened between the promise and the fulfilment; that its subserviency to the fulfilment was explained by a succession of prophets, whose words cherished the hope of a deliverer, and unfolded the spiritual meaning of all the preparation that was made for his coming; and that many of the ceremonies which were continually repeated, while they represented the pollution and the guilt of sin, could not appear to any enlightened mind sufficient to remove them. Accordingly, we learn from various expressions in Scripture, that there were in all ages of the Jewish church just and devout men, who “waited for the consolation of Israel,” who looked through the figures, that were for the time then present, to him who is the end of the law, who expected forgiveness of those breaches of the moral law, which they daily confessed, through the virtue of the new covenant that was announced to them, and who thus lived by the faith of a Saviour to come. John viii. 56. Rom. iii. 30. 1 Cor. x. 4. Gal. iii. 8, 9, 14. Luke ii. 25, 38.

To all who were thus enabled to look forward to Christ he was “the Lord their righteousness.” For the blood of the Lamb, who was foreordained before the foundation of the world, extends its efficacy to the ages that are past, as well as to those that are to come; and through him all that lived by faith under the Old Testament obtained full remission of sins, and a right to eternal life, of which they were put in possession immediately after death. With regard to them, therefore, our doctrine is thus expressed in the Confession of Faith; the means by which the covenant of grace was administered in the time of the law, “were for that time sufficient and efficacious, through the operation of the Spirit, to instruct and build up the elect in faith in the promised Messiah; there are not two covenants of grace differing in substance, but one and the same under various dispensations; the justification of believers under the Old Testament was in all respects one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament.”*

With regard to those in ancient times who knew nothing of the Jewish law, and those in modern times to whom the gospel has not been published, we feel a greater difficulty, at least we do not find

* Confession of Faith, vii. 5, 6; xi. 6.

ourselves so far enabled by Scripture to explain in what manner they can be saved. For although it is impossible that they could attain by any ordinary means that knowledge which is essential to faith in Christ, yet it is contrary to what we account the fundamental principles of Christianity, to believe that their actions, however useful to society, and however highly esteemed by men, possessed such a degree of perfection as to entitle them to acceptance with God. But it does not necessarily follow from the principles which we hold, that all such persons are finally condemned, because we can conceive that God may in some extraordinary manner convey to the souls of those who are to be saved that knowledge which he did not afford them the outward means of acquiring: and we are disposed to consider Job as an instance of this kind presented to us in Scripture; a man who appears to have had no acquaintance with the Mosaic dispensation, and yet who attained such an eminence of virtue as is honoured with the divine approbation, and who discovers such an assured hope of a final deliverance from all the evils of sin, as implies that his soul was illuminated with more than human knowledge.* There are numberless ways in which the Father of spirits may extend the knowledge of Christ to all those whose names enter into the decree of election, whatever be the circumstances in which they are placed; and we need not be surprised that the Scriptures give no aid to our conjectures as to the time or the manner of their illumination. For it may be observed in general, that while we are fully instructed in every thing which can serve to direct our conduct, we are kept in the dark as to every thing that may serve only to gratify our curiosity; and with regard to this particular point, it appears that the Scriptures give us no light for this reason, that the condition and the fate of persons, who are not favoured with the outward means of knowing Christ, form no rule to us who enjoy them. Whatever extraordinary revelation the mercy of God may vouchsafe to men in a different situation, our advantages serve at once to point out our duty, and to set bounds to our expectations; and all that concerns our everlasting peace is couched in the spirit of those significant words, which our Lord puts into the mouth of Abraham as an answer to the request of the rich man, who asked that Lazarus might be sent from the other world to his father's house to testify to his five brethren; "they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them."

It is obvious, from the view which has been given of the faith by which we are justified, that the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints necessarily results from the characteristical features of the Calvinistic system.† All the arguments for the doctrine, and all the answers to the objections against it which are to be found in the ordinary systems, are only the application of principles which have already been stated; and the Arminian and Calvinistic exposition of the multitude of texts, which have been quoted in the discussion of this question, turns upon distinctions and general views which have frequently occurred to us. For this reason, instead of entering minutely into a question which would only detain us with unnecessary repeti-

* Job xix. 23—27. Confession of Faith, x. 3.

† Confession of Faith, xvii. 1.

tions, I shall pass on to other questions, where the application of general principles is less obvious.

If all those who are justified be effectually preserved by the Spirit of God, so that they cannot fall from a state of grace, their final salvation, being certain, is an object of knowledge. It is known to God, and it may be known by themselves. Accordingly, we meet in Scripture with such expressions as the following: "We know that we have passed from death unto life.* I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day."† These, and other expressions of the same kind, imply that the apostle had a knowledge of his being to be saved. It follows, consequently, that a similar knowledge may be attained by other Christians. This is called, in theological language, an assurance of grace and salvation.‡

The church of Rome deny that it is possible for any man in a state of trial to attain this assurance; and they build some of the most gainful parts of their traffic upon that perpetual doubt and uncertainty with regard to our final condition, which they profess in some degree to remove by the prayers of the church, the merits of saints and martyrs, and the absolution which priests pronounce in the name of God.

The Arminians, who do not ascribe the salvation of men to the infallible effectual operation of the Spirit of God, but consider it as at all times suspended upon the co-operation of the human will, do not suppose it possible for any man to attain a greater certainty of salvation than this, that if he persist in faith he shall be saved. It is the character of fanaticism to resolve this assurance into an impression immediately made by the Spirit of God upon the mind, overpowering the reason of man, and independent of his exertions. But the Calvinists conceive that an assurance with regard to his final condition, very far beyond conjecture or probable conclusion, may be attained by a Christian without any special revelation, in a manner consistent with the full exercise of his rational powers. In forming this conception, they are accustomed to distinguish between the direct and the reflex act of faith. By the direct act of faith they mean that cordial acceptance of the method of deliverance proposed in the gospel, by which a believer rests in the merits of Christ for salvation. By the reflex act of faith they mean the consciousness of the direct act, the knowledge which he has that he believes; by which consciousness he is enabled to reason in this manner: the Scripture declares that whosoever believes in Christ shall obtain everlasting life; but I know that I believe in Christ, therefore I know that I shall obtain through him everlasting life.

This reflex act of faith, being subsequent to the direct act, is not essential to it; in other words, a person may believe in Christ, and may be justified by his faith, before he attain the assurance of his

* 1 John iii. 14.

† 2 Tim. i. 12; iv. 7, 8.

‡ Confession of Faith, xviii. 2.

being in a justified state. In some this assurance is much weaker than in others; in all it is liable to be overcast and shaken by bodily infirmity, by their own negligence, by affliction, by temptation, by that visitation of God which the Scriptures call his hiding his face from his people, and by occasional transgression; and in all it is accompanied with watchfulness, with fear of offending, and with a diligent use of the various instruments which contribute to the preservation of human integrity. But as there are certain fruits which always proceed from genuine faith, these fruits afford an evidence of its being implanted in the soul; and this evidence is accompanied with what the Scripture calls the witness of the Spirit, "who is the earnest of our inheritance," because as the fruits of righteousness are the effect of his operation, he bears witness with the spirit of all who are filled with these fruits, that they are the children of God.* The consciousness of their possessing faith is the witness of their own spirit: the presence of his fruits is his witness; and the two conspire in producing that peace with God and joy in the Holy Ghost, of which the Scriptures often speak as a portion, which in value "passeth all understanding," and which, to all that attain it, is the foretaste and the beginning of heaven in their souls.

* Rom. viii. 16. Sherlock's Sermon on the text.

CHAPTER III

CONNEXION BETWEEN JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION.

THE view given in the preceding chapter of the Calvinistic doctrine with regard to the assurance of grace and salvation, proceeds upon the supposition that there are certain fruits of the operation of the Spirit of God which always accompany genuine faith ; in other words, that there is an inseparable connexion between justification and sanctification. This connexion, although, in respect of practice, the most important doctrine in theology, is not obvious at first sight ; it has been overlooked or neglected by several sects of Christians ; and therefore it requires to be fully illustrated in this place.

Although it is the fundamental and characteristical doctrine of the Gospel that we are justified by faith, yet a great deal more than that word seems to imply is required of Christians. The Epistles of Paul, in which the doctrine of justification by faith is unfolded and established, like all the other parts of Scripture, are full of precepts commanding us to repent of our past sins, to abstain from all appearance of evil, to abound in the work of the Lord. While we read that “to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, and immortality, God will render eternal life,” we read also that the wrath of God, which is revealed in the Gospel against all unrighteousness of men, will at length be executed upon every soul of man that doeth evil, and that without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* The precepts contained in the discourses of our Lord, and the writings of his apostles, are the revealed will of God prescribing to Christians their duty. The duty which they delineate is what our reason and our heart approve ; and it is so agreeable to all our conceptions of the nature and the government of God, that the gospel, from the manner in which it delivers and enforces this duty, derives the high commendation of being the most effectual and the most refined system of morality which ever appeared. But where is the connexion, it is asked, between this system of morality and the doctrine which has been explained ? If we are justified by faith alone, and if justification include the remission of sins and a right to eternal life, where shall we find a place for the precepts of the Gospel ? And how can that obedience, which is certainly due to the will of our Creator, enter into a system of theology, which excludes works from having any share in our justification ? The principles upon which the Calvinistic system rests, appear to all who understand them to furnish a satisfying answer to these questions.

* Rom. i. 18 ; ii. 6—9. Heb. xii. 14.

If faith were a single act, by performing which at one particular time we were justified, or if it were a solitary quality infused into the soul, and unconnected with the general character, there would be much difficulty in reconciling the necessity of obedience with the doctrine of justification by faith. But we have seen that faith arises from that change which the Spirit of God produces, according to the Calvinists, by an efficacious operation, according to the Arminians by moral suasion, upon all those to whom the remedy is applied. Now this change is the beginning of sanctification, by introducing the principles of a new life, without which we cannot hate sin and follow after righteousness. For although many circumstances may induce men to assume the outward appearance of sanctity, nothing but the influence of that Spirit, which produces faith, can so effectually overcome the corruption of human nature as to produce that uniformity of sentiment, and purpose, and conduct, those habits of virtue, and that continual progress in goodness, which enter into the notion of sanctification. And thus justification, a forensic act which acquits those who believe from the guilt of sin, and sanctification, an inward change, by which the soul is delivered from the stain of sin, and gradually recovers its native purity and dignity, although distinct from one another, are inseparably joined, because the faith by which we are justified has its origin and principle in the change by which we are sanctified. Accordingly faith was formerly found in its nature to be connected with many good dispositions; and although we do not allow that these dispositions are in any respect the cause of our justification, or that they give faith any degree of merit in the sight of God, still we cannot deny that the connexion between them and faith is of such a kind, as renders it impossible for any person to have saving faith who is devoid of these dispositions. It is plain also, that as faith implies good dispositions, so it brings along with it the strongest incentives to obedience. The different parts of the revelation of the Gospel are fitted by their nature to have an influence upon the most perverse mind which assents to the truth of the revelation: but to a mind renewed by the grace of God this influence becomes commanding. A man who receives with joy and gratitude the discoveries of divine love made in the Gospel, who has an impression of the divine authority of its precepts, who relies on the promises of God, and who trembles at his threatenings, derives from faith, motives to obedience the most powerful and interesting; and his mind, restored by the influence of the Spirit to the state in which objects, appearing as they are, produce their full and proper effect, is formed to be led by these motives. To him, therefore, the moral law, originally written upon the heart, afterwards delivered to the children of Israel from Mount Sinai, and republished in the precepts of the Gospel, approves itself as reasonable, and just, and good; obedience to it becomes delightful; the dominion of sin is broken; the liberty of the children of God is a matter of experience; so that, according to the significant language used by Paul, "being made free from sin, and become the servant of God, he has his fruit unto holiness, and obeys from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered him."*

* Rom. vi. 17, 22.

From this intimate connexion between justification and sanctification, there results the following conclusions, which it is of infinite importance for all the ministers of the religion of Jesus clearly to apprehend, and firmly to retain.

1. We observe with what propriety and significancy it is said that good works are the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith. Although they follow after justification, they are the marks by which we know that we are in a justified state; there can be no well-grounded assurance of grace and salvation to any person who is destitute of these marks; and therefore the great business of Christians, according to the direction of Peter, is “to give all diligence to make their calling and election sure,” *i. e.* to attain the assurance of their being elected, by “adding to their faith” those things in which the elect are called to abound.*

2. We observe that a quaint phrase, which often occurs in theological writings, *fides sola justificat, sed non quæ est sola*,† is an attempt to express shortly and pointedly a distinction, which, when properly understood, enables us to reconcile the apostles Paul and James. Paul says, “that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law:”‡ James says, “that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”§ The two declarations appear to be inconsistent; but a little attention to the train of argument removes the apparent contradiction. Paul is arguing against persons who said that justification came by the law; and the works of the law mean, in his argument, not only the observance of the ceremonial law, but that measure of obedience to the moral law which any person, by the powers of human nature in its present state, is able to yield. This measure being always imperfect, and yielded by those who, as sinners, are under a sentence of condemnation, cannot justify; and therefore a man is justified only by that faith which accepts the imputation of the obedience of another. But this faith is represented by the apostle as working by love; and his writings not only abound with precepts addressed to those who believe, but are very much employed in illustrating the connexion between faith and obedience to these precepts. Although, therefore, Paul excludes all works done before justification from having any influence in bringing us into that state, yet the faith, to which he ascribes our justification, is understood and explained by him to be accompanied with every Christian grace, and productive of good works. But the faith of which James speaks is described as a faith without works, which is dead being alone; a faith which the devils have; for he says that “they also believe and tremble;” and the apostle, combating probably some dangerous practical error of his time, declares that this kind of faith is of none avail; because the faith by which a person is justified must be shown and made perfect by works. And thus the two apostles mean the same thing. Although each states the subject in the light which his particular argument requires, yet their writings suggest a distinction by which they are reconciled; a distinction, to which we are

* Peter i. 5—11.
‡ Romans iii. 28

† Confession of Faith, xi. 2.
§ James ii. 24.

obliged to have recourse in explaining other parts of Scripture,* between that faith, which, being alone, does not save us, and that faith fruitful in every virtue, by which we are justified.

3. We observe that the soundest Calvinists may say, without hesitation, that good works are necessary to salvation. The first reformers, whose great object was to establish, in opposition to the church of Rome, the doctrine of justification by faith, were afraid to adopt an expression which might seem to give countenance to the Popish doctrine of the merit of good works. Melancthon, indeed, maintained that they were necessary : but as he was known to have departed in various points from the doctrine held by Luther, this expression gave offence to many who adhered to that doctrine. Amsdorf, in the year 1552, went so far as to declare that good works were an impediment to salvation. Few are disposed to follow Amsdorf; but amongst unlearned people, who have been educated with rigid ideas of Calvinism, there exists a general prejudice against saying that good works are necessary. It is proper, therefore, to understand clearly that, while this expression may be misinterpreted, as if it implied that some good dispositions or good actions are required previous to justification, and are the cause of our being justified, there is a sound sense in which the whole strain of Scripture and the amount of the principles of Calvinism warrant us to say, that good works are essential to salvation; for none can be saved who have not that character which is produced by the Spirit of God in all that are justified, and none have that character in whom these unequivocal fruits of it do not appear.

4. We learn to guard against the errors of those who have received the names of Solifidians, Antinomians, and *fratres liberi spiritus*. The Solifidians probably meant nothing more than to exclude the merit of works in our justification. But their doctrine has often been so expressed, both in former times and in the present day, as to give countenance to an opinion that nothing more than faith is required of a Christian, and that he is saved by the solitary act of resting upon Christ. The Antinomians derive their name from appearing to institute an opposition between the moral law and the Gospel. There was a monstrous form in which Antinomianism appeared both before and after the Reformation, and which was revived in Britain amidst the extravagancies of the seventeenth century. It represented the elect as absolved from the obligation of the moral law, as at liberty to indulge their appetites without restraint, and to perform what actions they pleased without contracting any guilt, because, being in a justified state, it was impossible that any thing done by them could be displeasing to God. This horrible doctrine, from which the *fratres liberi spiritus*, in the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries, derived their name, calls for the correction of the civil magistrate rather than for an answer by argument: and although this doctrine has been avowed by some who profess to hold the Calvinistic system of predestination, yet he must have a very false and imperfect conception of that system who cannot readily show how it may be separated from so gross an abuse.

* Acts xvi. 30, 31.

John xii. 42, 43.

There is a more temperate form of Antinomianism, according to which it is not pretended that men are absolved from the obligation of the moral law ; but it is said that obedience to its precepts being purely the effect of the irresistible grace of God,—an effect which his grace will infallibly produce in the elect, and which no human means can produce in any others, the inculcating these precepts in discourses to the people is unnecessary, and may be hurtful, by inspiring their minds with a false opinion that something may be done by them, whereas the unregenerate can do nothing, and God does every thing in the elect. The only business, therefore, of preaching, according to this system, is to exhibit the condition of men by nature, and to proclaim the riches of the divine love in the whole economy of the gospel ; leaving sinners to feel that conviction of guilt and misery which will be thus excited in their breasts, and saints to follow the operations of the grace communicated to them, and of the sentiments of gratitude and love which the display of that grace may cherish. This more temperate form of Antinomianism, which has at different periods pervaded all the Reformed churches, and which gave their character to the greater part of British sermons during the seventeenth century, was ably combated in England by Bishop Stillingfleet and Dr. Williams. The first example of a kind of preaching, proceeding upon different principles, was set by the profound and learned Dr. Barrow, in sermons abounding with excellent matter, but written in a rugged obscure style, and affecting a multiplicity of divisions more fitted to perplex and fatigue the memory, than to assist the comprehension of the whole subject. His matter was exhibited in a more popular form by the copious Dr. Tillotson, who, although to us he appears diffuse and verbose, deserves to be ranked very high in the class of preachers, because, while he attacked the Antinomians by argument, he was the first who gave amenity and interest to a species of public discourses opposite to that which he condemned in them. The example was followed and improved by a succession of English divines ; early in the last century it found its way into Scotland ; and the gradual extension of moral science, the refinement of taste, and an enlarged acquaintance with life and manners, have produced amongst us a style of preaching totally different from that which our forefathers practised. With certain descriptions of people there still remains so much of Antinomian principles as to produce a predilection for what they call evangelical, or gospel preaching, as opposed to what they call moral or legal preaching. But this distinction is losing its hold of the minds of the people in many parts of Scotland ; and although discourses from the pulpit, approaching to the character of moral essays, are universally and justly disliked, there is a method of preaching morality which is far from being generally unpopular.

It may be thought, however, that the disrepute into which Antinomian preaching has begun to fall, is owing to a departure from Calvinism ; and there appears to be the more reason for this suspicion, that some of the sects amongst whom that kind of preaching continues to prevail, profess the strictest adherence to Calvinism, that Tillotson and other early adversaries of Antinomianism were avowed Arminians, and that all the peculiar tenets of the Arminians lead

them to press obedience, and to dwell more upon the duties than upon the doctrines of religion. But the principles which have been explained leave no room to suppose that Calvinism is inconsistent with rational practical preaching; and as it is most desirable that the place which the Calvinistic system allows for this kind of preaching should be distinctly understood, I shall suggest, as the last conclusion which may be drawn from the view given of the connexion between justification and sanctification,

5. That as the Scriptures abound with precepts and exhortations, so it is the duty of those who preach the gospel to “affirm constantly this faithful saying” and to imprint it upon the minds of their people, “that they who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.”* This duty may be performed in two ways, both of which ought occasionally to be employed. One of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity may be made the subject of discourse; and, after explaining it, as far as you are warranted by Scripture, you may illustrate its influence upon practice,—the obligations and the motives to holiness which arise from it. Or you may make one of the precepts of the Old or New Testament, or one of the examples held forth in Scripture, your subject; and, after pointing out the duty enjoined by the precept, or the lesson conveyed by the example, you may enforce it, by adding to all the considerations which reason, and prudence, and experience suggest, those most interesting arguments which the gospel affords. In either way you conjoin evangelical and moral preaching; you follow the example of Christ and his apostles; and you minister most effectually to the instruction of those who hear you. If you omit all mention of the doctrines, the motives and the views of the gospel, you become mere moralists; you neglect the advantages which the religion of Christ gives you for laying hold of the minds of men; and you may learn from the history of the heathen world, that such discourses, however sound in argument, however rich in imagery, however ornate in style, are little fitted to promote the reformation of mankind. But if, on the other hand, you fail to follow out the doctrines of the gospel to those consequences which are always deduced from them in Scripture; if the pictures which you present of the corruption of human nature and the efficacy of divine grace tend to convey an impression that all exertions upon our part are unnecessary and unavailing; and if your discourses give any person occasion to think that saving faith may exist in the mind of him who continues in sin, you not only preach the gospel in a manner for which the Scriptures give you no warrant, and do unspeakable injury to the people by unlinging all their moral ideas, but you depart from the principles of that system upon which you profess to build such discourses, and show that you have viewed it only on one side, without comprehending the connection of its parts. For, although, in opposition to Pelagian and Semi-Pelagian errors, we hold that man is passive in his conversion, that the inclination of the soul to turn to God is the work of the Spirit, for which there are no preparatory dispositions originally and naturally belonging to the mind, until it be renewed by grace; yet we hold also, that when

* Titus iii. 8.

these dispositions are implanted, they seek for exercise as much as the propensities which are inseparable from our frame; that when the mind is renewed it delights in those employments which are congenial to the image after which it is created; that when our faculties are emancipated from bondage they use the liberty which is restored to them; that man, instead of being passive after his conversion, is directed by the Spirit in the exercise of those powers of action which he has recovered, and that because "God worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure, he worketh out his own salvation."*

To man thus restored the precepts of the word of God are addressed. The obedience required of him is the obedience of faith, yielded in the strength which is given him, proceeding from the motives of the gospel, and relying for acceptance upon the grace there exhibited. But all the methods which according to the constitution of his nature may be of use in exciting him to this obedience are occasionally employed in Scripture. All the springs of action in the human breast, gratitude, love, hope, fear, emulation, the desire of honour, natural affection, and enlarged philanthropy, are there touched; and from thence we derive our example and our warrant for that variety in the style of practical preaching, by which we may, with the blessing of God, arrest the attention and reach the hearts of our hearers.

Although, therefore, the ministers of the gospel do not in every sermon lay down a system of theology, they are not to be supposed to have departed from the "form of sound words;" for that form admits of all the lessons of candour, justice, benevolence, temperance, piety, truth, and virtuous exertion; and of all the modes, historical, descriptive, argumentative, or pathetic, in which such lessons can be conveyed. Our discourses correspond to the design of preaching, when we inculcate these lessons in the method which appears to us most effectual for calling upon the people "not to receive the grace of God in vain," but "to stir up the gift of God which is in them:" and all who improve these lessons, so as to abound in the fruits of the Spirit, discover that they have felt that divine power, by which the disciples of Christ are created unto good works, and put forth the strength conveyed to their souls by him, "without whom they can do nothing," but "through whom they can do all things."

Fuller's Comparison of Calvinistic and Socinian Principles as to their moral tendency.

* Phil. ii. 12, 13.

CHAPTER IV.

SANCTIFICATION.

THAT change of character, which is the effect of the operation of the Spirit, and the beginning of sanctification, is called conversion, because it turns men from the sentiments and habits which enter into our view when we speak of human nature as corrupt, to those sentiments and habits which are produced by the Holy Spirit. Hence it follows, that sanctification consists of two parts. In considering its nature, each of these demands our attention. The first part is that which we call repentance.

SECTION I.

REPENTANCE and faith are often conjoined in Scripture as necessary for the remission of sins; they originate in the same change of character, and they cannot be separated. For as the repentance of sinners cannot be accepted by the righteous Governor of the universe without the righteousness of Christ, which by faith is counted as theirs, so their faith is not such as gives them an interest in that righteousness, unless they forsake the sins which upon account of it are forgiven. We say, therefore, in the words of our Confession of Faith, that “repentance unto life is an evangelical grace, the doctrine whereof is to be preached by every minister of the gospel, as well as that of faith in Christ.”* In preaching it, there is frequent occasion to illustrate the following propositions. 1. Repentance unto life proceeds upon the revelation made in the gospel of the mercy of God and the mediation of Christ; because, unless with the Socinians we deny the necessity of the atonement, we must account the case of every sinner desperate without that revelation.† 2. Repentance unto life does not consist merely in a reformation of the outward conduct, or an abstinence from those open transgressions which subject men to inconvenience and reproach; but it arises out of a heart which is renewed, as is intimated by the term *μετανοια*, which the sacred writers use to denote it, and it implies a hatred of sin; because, unless with the Socinians we deny the corruption of human nature, we cannot account a change permanent or acceptable, when the principles which produced former transgressions remain unsubdued. 3. Re-

* Confession of Faith, xv. 1.

† Psalm cxxx. 3.

penitance unto life does not rest in feelings of compunction and expressions of sorrow ; because if the emotions excited by the recollection of the past are founded upon a change of mind, they must be accompanied with a solicitude, and a constant endeavour to abstain from those sins which gave them birth.

Some of the grossest errors and corruptions of the church of Rome respect the doctrine of repentance. According to the tenets avowed in the standards, and sanctioned by the practice of that church, repentance consists in three acts ; confession of sins to the priest ; contrition, or attrition ; and satisfaction. 1. The practice of confessing their sins in private to the ministers of religion which the church of Rome requires of Christians, is unauthorized by Scripture. We are there commanded to confess our sins to God ; and in one place we are commanded to confess to one another our faults, *i. e.* the offences we have given to one another.* Persons guilty of notorious sins have, in all ages, according to directions left by Christ and his apostles, been excluded from the communion of the church. A desire of being re-admitted has led them to confess guilt in the presence of that society to whom they had given offence ; and this voluntary confession, being accepted as a testimony of the sincerity of their repentance, has restored them to that communion from which they were excluded. Upon this kind of confession, which was at first voluntary, and available only for the purpose of relieving from ecclesiastical censures, the church of Rome grounded that private auricular confession, which it enjoins to all as necessary for their acceptance with God. The doctrine concerning repentance was thus made the occasion of flagrant abuse. Not only is auricular confession productive of much inconvenience to society, by giving the ministers of religion an undue and dangerous influence over the minds of the people in their most secret affairs ; but it perverts their notions of the justification of a sinner, and it provides a method of quieting their consciences, which is so easy of access that it encourages them to sin with little fear. 2. If the word contrition means that sorrow for sin, which is connected with the hatred of it as a transgression of the divine law, and as rendering us odious to the Father of spirits, it is indeed indispensably required of every sinner, and it naturally produces a change of life ; for as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. vii. 10, “ Godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation ; ” a text most significant and instructive in itself, and upon which there is a sermon by Bishop Sherlock, which may be of more use than any treatise that I know in giving a distinct and full conception of the nature of repentance. But the Church of Rome, wishing it to be thought that they possess the power of imparting the benefits of repentance to persons who manifestly have not attained this godly sorrow, because they do not repent of their sins so as to forsake them, substitute as an alternative for contrition that sorrow, to which they give the name of attrition. By this they mean a sorrow, which proceeds not from a sense of the evil of sin, but from the loss, the shame, or inconvenience of any kind, of which it has been the occasion. This sorrow may be expressed by words, by gestures, or by actions ; and all these expressions of attrition, being considered

* James v. 16.

by the church of Rome as parts of repentance, although they do not imply any change upon the mind of a sinner, as conspiring with the two other parts of repentance to entitle him to receive absolution, make men easy under the consciousness of past sins, and form an inducement not to forsake these sins, but merely to exercise a little more prudence in the repetition of them. 3. By satisfaction the church of Rome means such works as the following: the saying a prescribed number of prayers, the giving a certain portion of alms to the poor and of gifts to the church, the submitting to certain mortifications and penances, or the engaging in appointed hazards and toils; all which deeds being set over against the sins which were confessed, and for which attrition was expressed, are conceived to constitute a compensation, offered by us to God for the breach of his law, in consideration of which that breach is forgiven. This last part of repentance appears to all who hold the perfection of the sacrifice offered by Christ upon the cross to be most dishonourable to him, because it implies a necessity of our adding a personal atonement for sin to the "one offering by which he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." To all who entertain that opinion of our good works which I am by and by to state, it appears most presumptuous on our part; and, independently of any system of religious opinions, it plainly institutes a kind of traffic, which is most unseemly, which may be perverted to the worst purposes, and which totally unsettles the foundations of morality, by teaching that the performance of one duty is an excuse for the neglect of another.

In opposition to these errors and corruptions of the church of Rome, some of which may be traced in prejudices that still remain in the minds of the people of Scotland, we hold, and it is a great part of the business of our preaching to remind the people, that repentance, proceeding from a change of mind, and implying that sorrow which the Apostle calls godly, terminates not in certain formal acts which may be performed by any one, but in a change of life; that it is accepted by God, not as any compensation or atonement for the offences committed against him, but purely upon account of the merits of Christ; and that the only unequivocal marks of its being effectual for the remission of sins, or being what the Scripture calls repentance unto life, are to be sought for not in the impressions, or emotions, or resolutions, with which it is accompanied, but in the solicitude with which men avoid the sins of which they profess to repent, and in the zeal and the care with which they study to practice the opposite virtues.

It is possible, indeed, that repentance may be sincere, when there is no opportunity of exhibiting these marks: for it would be presumptuous in us to say, that the steps by which a criminal is conducted to his end are in no case the instruments which the Spirit of God employs in his conversion, or that sudden death, by cutting short the labour of virtue which had just been begun, blots the beginning of it out of the book of life. But it is very much our duty to warn the people of the folly, the guilt, and the danger of continuing in sin, and trusting to a late repentance: and although, when we are called to witness those professions of repentance, which are sometimes produced by the near approach of death, we naturally express our earnest wish that they may find acceptance with the Searcher of

hearts, who alone can judge of their sincerity, yet we should beware of doing a very great injury to others, by encouraging those, who are leaving the world, to think that what is called the reflex act of faith is at that time a sufficient ground for assurance of salvation. When this reflex act is accompanied with the evidence which arises from the fruits of the Spirit, it is justified in the eyes of men; and the soul by which it is exerted, being sealed by the Spirit, may rise to what the Scripture calls "joy in the Holy Ghost." But fanaticism opens a door to extreme licentiousness of morals, when it teaches that the high privilege, sometimes attained by those who have persevered in well-doing, is instantaneously and certainly conferred upon the man, who, being awakened at the close of a sinful life, by considerations and views that were strange to him, either says or thinks that he believes.

Some questions concerning repentance will find a place afterwards. But there is one other error respecting the nature of it, which should be mentioned here, and which results directly from the principles of fanaticism.

It has been thought that Christians may be able to tell the precise time of their conversion. It has sometimes been judged proper to require from them such a declaration; and there are certain exercises of the soul, implying great dejection and agitation and self-reproach, and known in books, more frequently read in former times than now, by the name of a law-work, which it has been supposed necessary for every person to experience, upon whom the Spirit of God produces a change of character. All these views proceed upon the supposition that the operation of the Spirit of God is instantaneous, discriminated by some sensible marks from the natural workings of the human mind, and observing in all cases a certain known, discernible progress. But we found formerly that this supposition receives no countenance from the general strain of Scripture, that the words of our Lord, in his conversation with Nicodemus, (John iii. 8,) seem intended to teach us that the operations of the Spirit are known only by their fruits, and that as to the manner in which these fruits are produced, "the kingdom of God, which is within us," often "cometh not with observation." If the whole man be renewed by the grace of God, all the actions performed in consequence of this renovation will appear to be as much the actions of the man, as if the Spirit of God had not produced any change; if the change be accomplished by means, by a gradual preparation, and a gentle progress, it may be impossible to tell the time when it commenced, or to mark all its stages; and if, in some cases, the means are a pious education, or a succession of improving objects and of virtuous employments, continued from infancy to manhood, this favourable situation may restrain the corruption of the human heart from atrocious crimes, or presumptuous sins. But as it is repugnant to common sense, and to our sentiments with regard to human conduct, to say that all men are equally wicked, or all sins equally heinous, it appears absurd to suppose that those whose conduct has been widely different ought to feel the same remorse; and therefore, although the best men are always the most sensible of their own infirmities, and although human virtue cannot be so perfect as to exclude humility, self-abasement, and the need of repentance, yet it is reasonable to think that the manner of repentance, both the inward

sentiments and the outward expressions, will vary according to the measure and the aggravation of those sins which men forsake. Hence we may draw two inferences, which I shall barely mention; that those discourses do not serve a good purpose, which represent it as indispensably necessary for all who repent to feel the same remorse; and that a doctrine, which has sometimes been avowed by Calvinists, but has oftener been imputed to them by those who wish to hold forth their tenets to public scorn, is totally groundless; the doctrine, namely, that those who have been the greatest sinners are likely to become the most eminent saints.

SECTION II.

THE second part of sanctification is conjoined with repentance in numberless passages of Scripture. "Depart from evil and do good.—Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.—That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.—Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

Sanctification, then, means a new life, the production of a habit of righteousness, as well as an aversion from sin; and this habit of righteousness appears in those good works which the precepts of the gospel require, unto which, it is said, we are created,† and which all that believe in God are commanded to be careful to maintain.‡

When we say that the precepts of the gospel declare what those good works are, we do not mean that the gospel has given a new law unconnected with every former intimation of the will of the Creator. For the moral law, being founded in the nature of God and the nature of man, does not, like the ceremonial or the judicial law, admit of being abrogated. It is in all situations binding, upon that creature to whom it is made, by the constitution of his own mind; and although the duty of man may be unfolded in succeeding revelations with greater clearness, and directions may be delivered suited to the particular circumstances in which the revelations were given, yet the same general principles of morality must pervade every system of duty, which proceeds from the righteous Governor of the universe for the regulation of the conduct of man.

From this view of the immutability of the moral law we deduce a satisfying answer to the Antinomians, who say that Christians are released from its obligation. For upon this ground we are able to show that, although "Christians are not under the law, but under grace," in this sense, that they are not justified with God by their obedience to the moral law, they are as much bound to obey it as if another method of justification had not been revealed to them. Hence also we deduce the excellence of Christian morality, as a matter

* Psalm xxxiv. 14. Titus ii. 11, 12. Ephes. iv. 22, 24. Rom. vi. 11.

† Ephes. ii. 10.

‡ Titus iii. 8.

not of mere positive institution, but of everlasting obligation: and in discoursing of any particular Christian duty, we scruple not to avail ourselves of all those views of the beauty, the utility, and fitness of virtue exhibited by heathen moralists, which serve to illustrate its conformity to our constitution and circumstances, while we superadd those interesting motives which arise out of the genius and spirit of the gospel. Hence also we deduce the perfect consistency between the precepts of the Old and the New Testament. It is upon this ground we stand, when we refuse to admit with the Socinians that Christ has added any thing to that moral law of which he is the interpreter; and we think that, by the aid of those commentaries upon the ten commandments, which are scattered through his discourses, and the writings of his apostles, we are able to show that all the branches of Christian morality are included in the Decalogue. In the ordinary systems of theology, and above all in Calvin's Institutes, there is an explication of the Decalogue, which merits the particular attention of those whose business it is to instruct the people. Calvin's commentary on this subject not only presents a short picture of the whole summary of our duty, but also deduces all the branches of it from general principles, so as to illustrate the connexion, the obligation, and the relative importance of the several parts of morality.

The precepts of the gospel, thus considered not as the extension, but as the interpretation of the moral law, are the directory of a Christian; and in this directory is to be sought a solution of all the questions that can occur in what may be called Christian Casuistry. Although discourses from the pulpit ought always to present to the people both the doctrines and the duties of religion in the most unembarrassed form, yet as the discussion of controverted points of doctrine engages the attention of men of speculation in theology, so casuistry, which is the application of the general rules of morality to particular cases, finds a place in those books which profess to treat accurately of the duties of a Christian, and has at different periods furnished subjects of debate, which have been very keenly agitated. At some times Christian casuistry has descended to insignificant attempts to regulate our dress, the measure of our food, our sleep, and our amusement; intruding into many branches of the general conduct of life, where every man claims a degree of liberty, and where particular directions can be of no use, because what is right in one person is wrong in another;—because it is impossible to frame rules for every variety of circumstances,—and because the best of all rules are to be found in those considerations of propriety and benevolence, which a sound understanding and a good heart will not fail to suggest upon every occasion. At other times, Christian casuistry has turned upon general questions, suggested by scruples that were founded upon a literal interpretation of particular texts of Scripture. Such are the doubts entertained by the Quakers, and some other sects, whether a Christian is allowed by the laws of his religion to engage in war, to take an oath in a court of justice, or to exercise the office of a magistrate. At other times, Christian casuistry has reached the very foundations of morality; turning upon questions which did not arise from the scruples of those who were afraid of

doing wrong, but from the presumption of men, who, wishing to shake off the restraints of the divine law, without openly denying its authority, were ingenious in devising evasions and subterfuges, by which the precepts of the gospel are accommodated to their corruption. Such are the questions, whether actions, in themselves evil and contrary to the precepts of the gospel, become lawful and meritorious, when they are performed with a good intention, and for a good end; whether a person avoids the guilt of perjury by a mental reservation at the time when he swears; and other questions of the same kind, to which the attention of the Christian world was directed by that loose system of morality, which the order of Jesuits invented and defended, and which, if it prevailed universally, would annihilate mutual confidence, and dissolve the bonds of society.

All the questions that can occur in these three kinds of casuistry are easily decided, when an enlightened and upright mind applies, with a due exercise of attention, the principles furnished by considering the precepts of the gospel as the interpretation of that moral law, which is binding upon men in all situations. For the precepts of the gospel, considered in this light, will be found to mark, with a precision sufficient for the direction of life, the outlines of that conduct which is characteristic of a Christian; a conduct which shines before men without affectation, which is guarded without being austere, which is beneficent without being officious, and in which piety, righteousness, goodness, and temperance, are blended together with nice proportion, and with perfect harmony. This is the conduct which the precepts of the gospel, and the life of Jesus, conspire in teaching, which it is the business of the ministers of religion in their discourses to delineate and recommend, and of which they should ever be careful to show an example corresponding to the delineation which they give.

The same principle, which furnishes a solution of all the cases that can occur in Christian casuistry, exposes the falsehood of a doctrine of the church of Rome respecting the nature of good works, which has laid the foundation of many gross corruptions. It was held that there are in the gospel counsels of perfection; *i. e.* that besides precepts which are binding upon all, and which none can disobey without sin, there are advices given, which men are at liberty to neglect if they please, but a compliance with which constitutes a superior degree of perfection. The counsels of perfection are generally reduced to three; voluntary poverty,—a vow of perpetual chastity,—and a vow of what is called regular obedience. The first is founded chiefly upon the command addressed by our Lord to the young man who came to him, “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast.” The second is founded upon some expressions in the epistles of Paul. The third, the vow of that kind of obedience which is yielded by those who lead a monastic life to the superiors of their order, is founded upon the mention made in the epistles of the reverence and obedience due to spiritual governors. Into the particulars of this branch of the Popish controversy it is unnecessary to enter. Sound criticism easily gives such an explication of the passages to which I have alluded, as withdraws the support which the distinction between precepts and counsels in matters of morality appears to de-

rive from Scripture ; and that distinction is completely overturned by all our conceptions of the law of God, and particularly by our considering the precepts of the gospel as the complete directory of the conduct of a Christian. It is not meant, by using that expression, that they extend to those matters of indifference in which a man may be safely left at liberty, or that they supersede the exercise of prudence at those times, when he may innocently accommodate his actions to his situation. It is allowed that the duties of men vary according to their circumstances, that all have not the same opportunities of doing good, and that some are called, by the talents which are committed to them, and the advantages which they enjoy, to make greater exertions than others. But, from the principle which has been illustrated, this consequence clearly results, that every man is bound to embrace all the opportunities of doing good which his situation affords, because, according to that principle, the service of his whole life, and the full exertion of all his faculties, are due to his Creator. Every counsel, therefore, of the divine word respecting moral duty is a command ; and “to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” But a man ought to be certain that what he does is good ; for if, in place of what his situation marks out to be his duty, he substitutes actions which in his imagination appear to imply a higher degree of virtue, he is so far from attaining perfection by this substitution, that his conduct may be very sinful. He is guilty of neglecting what he ought to have done ; a neglect which is always faulty, and which in some situations is both highly criminal and most hurtful to society. By this substitution also he entangles himself in difficulties, perhaps beyond his strength ; and, after all his mortifications and exertions, he has no warrant to think that a service which was not required at his hand, but which was the result of his own presumption, will be accepted by his Creator.

For these reasons it appears to Protestants, that the self-denial and abstemiousness of the monastic life, the voluntary poverty of the mendicant friars, the celibacy of the clergy, the multitude of prayers which many make it the business of their lives to offer, the pilgrimages which have often been undertaken, the large donations which have been left to the church, and the hard services which have been performed at her command, have not that supereminent excellence which is ascribed to them in the church of Rome. It appears to Protestants, that as these good works are not commanded by the precepts of the gospel, which are the complete directory of the conduct of a Christian, they cannot be imposed upon any as a part of their duty to God ; and that the performing them ultroneously, far from coming up to that refined and spiritual morality, by the practice of which Christians are commanded to do more than others, is an effort after an ideal and false perfection, which withdraws men from the duties they are called to perform, which diverts the powers of human nature and the bounties of Providence from the purposes for which they were bestowed, and which tends to destroy the essence of morality, by leading men to rest in the splendour of external actions, instead of cultivating those virtues of the heart out of which are the issues of a good life.

From the doctrine of justification by faith, Protestants easily de-

duce a refutation of other opinions of the church of Rome, concerning the merit of good works. The schoolmen in that church spoke of *meritum de congruo*, and *meritum de condigno*. By *meritum de congruo*, they meant the value of good works and good dispositions previous to justification which it was fit or congruous for God to reward by infusing his grace. To this kind of merit the whole of the Calvinistic doctrine concerning justification by faith is directly opposed. By *meritum de condigno*, they meant the value of good works performed after justification in consequence of the grace then infused. These, although performed by the grace of God, were conceived to have that intrinsic worth which merits a reward, and to which eternal life is as much due as a wage is to the servant by whom it is earned. In opposition to this kind of merit, Protestants hold that as every thing which we can do is our bounden duty and is not profitable to God, our good works cannot, in a proper sense of the word merit, deserve a recompense from him; that although the good works commanded in Scripture, and produced by the influence of the Spirit, give the person who maintains a real excellence of character, by which he is superior to others, by which he is "acceptable to God, and approved of men," and in respect of which he is styled in Scripture worthy, they do not constitute a right to claim any thing from God as a reward; that the expression frequent in Scripture, "God will render to every man according to his deeds," implies that good works are a preparation for heaven, or an indispensable qualification for the promised reward, and that there shall be a proportion between the virtuous exertion here and the measure of the reward conferred hereafter; but that good works are not in any respect the procuring cause of the reward. For the reward is represented as "of grace, not of debt," flowing from the promise of God upon account of the merits of his Son; and while death is called "the wages of sin," Rom. vi. 23, eternal life is said, in the very same verse, to be "the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The church of Rome did not rest in saying that our good works may merit eternal life. As they supposed that there are in Scripture counsels of perfection, a compliance with which constitutes a supereminent excellence of character, they inferred that those who attained this excellence did more than merit eternal life for themselves. To the actions by which men choose to follow these counsels of perfection, they gave the name of works of supererogation. They supposed that, by the communion which subsists amongst all Christians, the benefit of works of supererogation performed by some is imparted to others; and in the progress of the corruptions of that church, it was taught and believed that the whole stock of superfluous merit arising out of the good works of those who comply with the counsels of perfection, is committed to the management of the Pope, to be parcelled out according to his pleasure, in such dispensations and indulgences as the sins or infirmities of other members of the church appear to him to stand in need of. It is sufficient for the refutation of these tenets in this place to mention them. Notwithstanding the preparation of ages, by which the minds of men had been conducted to these articles of faith, and the various interests which were concerned in their being retained, the enormous abuses of that discre-

tionary power with which they invested the Pope were the immediate cause of the Reformation: and although the change then introduced into the religious system of a great part of Christendom was accompanied with much enthusiasm and violent mental agitation, yet the principles upon which it proceeded approve themselves to the understanding of every sober inquirer, who follows out, through its several branches, the great doctrine held by the first reformers of justification by faith. For, according to that doctrine, the pardon of sin and our right to eternal life are entirely owing to the merits of Christ, which are counted as ours, in consequence of our possessing that faith which produces such good works as the law of God commands; so that although good works are essential to our own salvation, they are not the meritorious cause of it; and although our good works may minister to the comfort and improvement of others upon earth, "none of us can by any means redeem his brother, or give to God a ransom for him."

It would be an additional refutation of the merit of good works, and would demonstrate the impossibility of works of supererogation, if it could be shown that even a person who is justified cannot yield a perfect obedience to the commands of God. For, in that case, however splendid some of his actions might be, the sin and the consequent guilt which adhere to others, would take away from his whole character every claim of right to a reward. Accordingly there yet remains one question with regard to good works, which requires to be stated more fully than any of the preceding, upon account of the principles that are involved in the discussion, and the consequences that flow from it. The question is, whether it is possible that the good works of Christians can be free from every mixture of sin; or, to speak in theological language, whether the sanctification of the elect is in this life complete.

SECTION III.

IT was the principle of a fanatical sect, which arose early after the Reformation, and was known from a particular circumstance in their practice by the name of Anabaptists, that the visible church of Christ consists of saints, or persons free from every kind of sin. The doctrine taught by Munzer, the founder of this sect, resulted entirely from this principle; and his enthusiasm prevented him from perceiving that such a church is not to be found upon earth. Several modern sects, which have arisen out of the ancient Anabaptists, have been instructed by reason, by Scripture, and by experience, to accommodate their principles to the present state of human nature. But while they admit that many members of the church sin, repent, and are forgiven, they contend that it is possible to attain that degree of perfection in which men are exempt from sinning, and they mean to insinuate that this degree of perfection is often found in their society.

This presumption, which in all fanatical sects has its foundation in the confidence of their being under the immediate direction of the Spirit, is generally cherished by their holding some form of the Syner-

gistical doctrine. Pelagians and Socinians, who do not admit that the powers of human nature were injured by the fall, readily conclude that every man is as able to obey the commands of God, as Adam was immediately after his creation; that he who abstains from one sin may abstain from all; and that perfect innocence is thus attainable by a proper exercise of our own faculties. And all who hold that modification of these tenets, which is called Semi-Pelagianism, consider the corruption of human nature as neither so inveterate nor so universal, but that in some persons the influence of the Spirit being favourably received, and finding a co-operation of all their powers, may, by the continuance of a proper attention on their part, be rendered so effectual for their sanctification as to preserve them from every thing sinful.

Accordingly it is the doctrine of a great part of the church of Rome, of the Franciscans, and the Jesuits, or Molinists, that perfection is attainable in this life. In order to reconcile this position with those defects and errors which have been observed in the lives of the best men that ever lived, they make a distinction between mortal and venial sins. By mortal sins, they understand actions which are so flagrant a transgression of the law of God, and imply such deliberate wickedness, as to deserve final condemnation; and from these they consider every man, into whom the grace of God has been infused at his first justification, as completely preserved. By venial sins, they understand both those sudden emotions of passion and inordinate desire, which, so long as they are restrained from going forth into action, are regarded by them as the constitutional infirmities of human nature; and also those actions, which, although contrary to the letter of the law, are in themselves a trifling transgression, or are attended with circumstances alleviating the fault and indicating good intention. It was meant by calling such sins venial, either that they deserve no punishment at all, or that they are completely expiated by temporal sufferings, so as not to be remembered in the judgment of the last day: and it was understood, that when the sins of this kind, into which it is admitted a saint may fall, are set over against his uninterrupted obedience to all the great commandments of the law and the supereminent excellence of his good works, his character, upon the whole, is entitled to be accounted perfect.

On the other hand, the Dominicans and Jansenists learned, from the doctrine of Augustine concerning the corruption of human nature and the measure of divine grace, to hold the following position, which is absolutely inconsistent with the perfection of good works; "that there are divine precepts which good men, notwithstanding their desire to observe them, are nevertheless absolutely unable to obey; nor has God given them the measure of grace that is essentially necessary to render them capable of such obedience." This is one of the five propositions contained in the book entitled *Augustinus*, which was often condemned in the seventeenth century by the Popes. Jansenius, the author of that book, who meant to give a faithful picture of the sentiments of Augustine, derived this proposition from the writings of that father; and, in like manner, all those Protestants, who hold that system which Calvin also learned from Augustine, not only say that perfection is not in fact attained in this life, but say further that it can-

not be attained, and that it is part of the economy of the Gospel, that sanctification, although it originates in the operation of the Spirit of God, continues to be incomplete. Thus the Church of England maintains, in the twelfth Article, "good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins and endure the severity of God's judgment:" in the fifteenth Article, "all we, although baptized and born again in Christ, yet offend in many things;" and in the sixteenth Article, "they are to be condemned which say they can no more sin as long as they live here." In like manner our Confession of Faith declares, Chap. xiii. 2, "Sanctification is throughout in the whole man; yet imperfect in this life, there abiding still some remnants of corruption in every part:" and Chap. xvi. 6, 7, "Our best works as they are wrought by us are defiled and mixed with so much weakness and imperfection, that they cannot endure the severity of God's judgment. Yet, notwithstanding the persons of believers being accepted through Christ, their good works also are accepted in him, not as though they were in this life wholly unblameable and unreprouable in God's sight; but that he, looking upon them in his Son, is pleased to accept and reward that which is sincere, although accompanied with many weaknesses and imperfections.

This doctrine of the imperfection of sanctification in this life, which the two established churches of this island thus manifestly agree in holding, rests upon such grounds as the following. The Scriptures, while they declare that "in many things we offend all," give no countenance to the dangerous distinction between venial and mortal sins. But although they represent sins of different magnitudes and deserving different degrees of punishment, they also represent every transgression of the law of God as implying that guilt by which the transgressor is under a sentence of condemnation; and they apply the name of sin to inordinate desire even before it is carried forth into action, and uniformly describe it as offensive to God.

Further, they hold it forth as the distinguishing and peculiar character of the man Christ Jesus, that he was without sin, and they record many grievous sins committed by those, whom, from the manner in which they are spoken of in other places, we are led to consider as having been justified with God.

Further, there are in the New Testament descriptions of a continued struggle between the Spirit, which is the principle of sanctification, and the corruption of human nature, by which that principle is opposed. The most striking passage of this kind is to be found in Romans vii. Calvinists generally consider the apostle as there speaking, in his own person, of a man who has been regenerated by the grace of God. In this case his expressions mark very strongly the corruption that remains in the hearts of the best men. Other Christians, who deny, or who wish to extenuate this corruption, consider him as speaking in the person of a man who has not partaken of the grace of God; in which case his expressions mark either the combat between appetite and reason which all moral writers describe, or the compunction and self-reproach of a man who is struggling by the mere powers of his own nature to disentangle himself from habits of vice. The true interpretation of the passage must be gathered by a

careful study of the writings of Paul, and by the help of the best commentators. There are other passages in his Epistles, where the same struggle which the Calvinists suppose to be meant in Romans vii. seems to be described. Of this kind is the following: Gal. v. 17, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." It appears, too, that the general strain of Scripture,—the image of a warfare under which it describes the Christian life,—the fear and circumspection which it enjoins, and the daily prayer for forgiveness which our Lord directs his followers to present, all favour the Calvinistic doctrine respecting the imperfection of sanctification. To these arguments from Scripture it may be added, that this doctrine corresponds with the circumstances of man in a present state, where he is surrounded with temptations to evil, and retains, in a greater or less degree, a propensity to yield to them; and that it is unquestionably agreeable to the experience of the best people, who not only feel many infirmities, but who are accustomed to acknowledge that, after all their exertions, they fall very far short of what they are in duty bound to do, and that, with all their circumspection and vigilance, they often commit sins for which they have need of repentance.

To a doctrine thus supported by Scripture and experience, it is not enough to oppose, as the advocates for the perfection of the saints are wont to do, reasonings drawn from the power and the holiness of God, from the intension of the death of Christ, or from the gift of the Spirit. Far from presuming upon these reasonings, that a full participation of the benefits of the gospel will in this life overcome the corruptions of human nature so entirely as to leave no remainders of sin, it becomes us to correct our conjectures with regard to the effect of the operation of God by the declarations of his word, and by the measure in which that effect is experienced by his people. Since these two rules of judging are, upon this point, in perfect concert, every passage of Scripture, which appears to contradict the doctrine which they unite in establishing, must receive such an interpretation as shall render Scripture consistent with itself; and every branch of the Calvinistic system must be held with such qualification as this doctrine renders necessary. When we read, therefore, 1 John iii. 9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God," we understand the apostle to mean, not that sin is never committed by those who are born of God; for we find him expressing himself thus, 1 John i. 8, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;" but that whosoever is born of God is not an habitual sinner, or cannot obstinately persist in committing sin. When we meet with exhortations to perfection,—when we find the word perfect introduced into some of the characters drawn in Scripture,—when we read of persons "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," we understand a comparative perfection to be spoken of, sincerity of obedience, hatred of every kind of sin; what the Scripture often mentions along with perfection as equivalent to it, an upright and zealous endeavour to conform in all things to the law of

God ; what is called by divines a perfection of parts, although not of degrees. When we speak of the perseverance of the saints, we mean, not an uniform unsinning obedience, but the continual operation of the principles communicated to their souls, and always abiding there, by which they are certainly recovered from the sins into which they are betrayed, and are enabled, amidst all their weaknesses and imperfections, to “grow in grace.” And we allow that the assurance of grace and salvation is very much interrupted by the sins, of which the best men are occasionally guilty.

As all the parts of the Calvinistic system are intimately connected with one another, so the doctrine which we are now illustrating is essentially necessary in order to our holding the two doctrines last mentioned, the perseverance of the saints, and the assurance of grace and salvation. For as it is an unquestionable fact that all men sin, unless it be admitted that sanctification is in this life incomplete, it will follow either that there are none upon earth who ever partook of the grace of God, which is to deny the existence of the church of Christ, or that those who have been sanctified repeatedly fall from a state of grace, and never can have any assurance of their final salvation. But if the doctrine of the imperfection of sanctification be admitted, there is no impossibility in holding the two others. At the same time it must be acknowledged, that the part of the Calvinistic system, which is the most liable to abuse, is the connection between these three doctrines : and there is no subject upon which the ministers of the gospel are called to exercise so much caution, both in their public discourses and in their private intercourse with the people. Many are disposed to solace themselves under the consciousness of their own sins, by the recollection of those into which good men have formerly fallen, and by a confidence that, as sanctification is always imperfect, they may be amongst the number of the elect, although their lives continue to be stained with gross transgression. It is not by holding forth ideal pictures of human perfection, that this dangerous error is to be counteracted ; for this is encouraging the indolence of those who entertain it, by confirming them in the belief that it is impossible for them to do what is required. It must be met by imprinting upon the minds of our hearers such important truths as the following : that the remainder of corruption which God sees meet to leave in the best, while it serves to correct the deep despair which in some constitutions accompanies religious melancholy, is to all a lesson of humility and watchfulness ; that they, who, from experience of this corruption, or from the sins which it produces in others, take encouragement to persist in deliberate and wilful transgression, discover a depravity of heart which indicates that no saving change has been wrought upon their character ; that the repentance, which we are called to exercise for our daily offences, implies a desire and an endeavour to abstain from sin ; that those aspirations after a state where the spirits of the just shall be made perfect, which are quickened by the consciousness of our present infirmities, cannot be sincere without the most vigorous efforts to acquire the sentiments and habits which are the natural preparation for that state ; that although none are in this life faultless, yet some approach much nearer to the standard

of excellence held forth in the gospel than others ; and that it is the duty of all, by continued improvements in goodness, to go on to perfection.

These views, all of which are clearly warranted by Scripture, guard against the abuse which I mentioned ; and that imperfect but progressive sanctification, which is the work of the Spirit, opens the true nature of Christian morality—of that evangelical perfection which all the discoveries of the gospel tend to form, and which through the grace of the gospel is accepted of God and crowned with an everlasting reward. Christian morality has its foundation laid in humility. It excludes presumption, and self-confidence, and claims of merit. It implies continual vigilance and solicitude. Yet it is a morality free from gloom and despair ; because it is connected with a dependence upon that Almighty power, and a confidence in that exuberant goodness, which furnish the true remedy for the present weakness of human nature. It is a morality not exempt from blemishes ; “for there is no man that sinneth not.” But it is a morality which extends with equal and uniform care to all the precepts of the divine law, which admits not of the deliberate continued indulgence of any sin, and which follows after perfection. Every failure administers a lesson of future circumspection ; compunction for the sins that are daily repented of, and thankfulness for the grace by which they are forgiven, bind the soul more closely to the service of God ; the affections are gradually purified ; virtuous exertion becomes more vigorous and successful ; there is a sensible approach, in passing through the state of trial, to the unsullied holiness which belongs to the state of recompense. The soul, established by a consciousness of this progress in the joy and peace of believing, cherishes the desire and the hope of being made like to God ; and the whole life of a Christian upon earth corresponds to the words in which the apostle Paul has described his opinion of himself, his conduct, and his expectations. “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect ; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us, therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.”*

* *Philippians* iii. 12—15.

CHAPTER V.

COVENANT OF GRACE.

MANY of the terms, which were introduced in the discussion of particular theological questions, have now become part of the technical language of theology; such as reconciliation, satisfaction, atonement, redemption, and others which belong to the nature of the remedy; predestination, election, reprobation, grace, and others which belong to the extent and the application of the remedy. There are other terms including a complex view of the whole subject, which could not properly be explained till we had finished the three great divisions of it. I am now to speak of several terms which are in common use amongst all Christians, although not understood by all in the same sense, because more or less meaning is annexed to them, according to the opinions entertained upon the different parts of the whole subject.

1. The dispensation of the gospel is often represented in Scripture under the notion of a kingdom; the kingdom of Christ; a kingdom given to him by the Father, in which all power is committed to him, and all nations are appointed to do him homage. Those who refuse to submit to him are his enemies, who shall illustrate his glory by the punishment which he will inflict. Those who believe in him, being relieved by his interposition from misery, are his subjects, his people, attached to their deliverer by gratitude, admiration, and a sense of duty; showing forth his praise now by their obedience to those laws which he has enacted, and by the peace and joy which, through that obedience, they attain; and destined to exhibit through all ages the triumphs of the Captain of Salvation, by the supreme felicity which they shall receive hereafter as his gift. His power is exerted in applying the remedy to this peculiar people, or in disposing their minds to embrace it, and in forming and preserving that character by which they are prepared for entering into the joy of their Lord. For this purpose he imparts to them those gifts which "he received for men when he ascended on high; he sends his Spirit into their hearts; he enables them to overcome those spiritual enemies which are often mentioned in Scripture; he makes the angels, who are also subject to him, ministering spirits to these heirs of salvation: and he renders the whole course of his providence subservient to their improvement. By all these means he keeps their souls from evil while they live upon earth; and having "destroyed him that had the power of death," he will raise their bodies from the grave, and give them a crown of life.

This is a picture which is presented not only in the bold figures of the ancient prophets, but also in the more temperate language of the writers of the New Testament. Many of the parts are very pleasing ; and all unite with perfect consistency in forming a splendid interesting object, possessing that entire unity which arises from a continued reference to one illustrious person. Those who differ very widely in opinion as to the dignity of the person, or the purpose and the execution of his undertaking, cannot agree as to the method of filling up and colouring the several parts of this picture. But they all profess to use the same phrases, as being clearly founded in the language of Scripture ; and the interpretation, by which they accommodate these phrases to their own particular systems, is easily deduced from the general principles of those systems. Hence it is sufficient for me thus briefly to notice this very extensive subject of popular and practical preaching.

2. There is a second kind of phraseology founded upon the connexion between Jesus Christ and his subjects, by which they are represented sometimes as parts of a building, of which he is the corner-stone ; sometimes as his branches, he being the true vine ; and more commonly as the members of a body, of which he is the head, deriving from him strength for the discharge of every duty, and the principles of that life which shall never end. This last figure expresses, in the most significant manner, what is called in theological language the union of believers with Christ. The bond of union is their faith in him ; the effects of the union are a communication of all the fruits of his sufferings ; a sense of his love ; a continued influence of his Spirit ; and a security derived from his resurrection and exaltation that they shall be raised and glorified with him. And thus, while this figure serves in a very high degree to magnify the completeness of the provision made by Christ for the salvation of his people, it inculcates at the same time, with striking force, a lesson of dependence upon him, and a lesson of mutual love. But as all figures are apt to be abused by the extravagance of human fancy, there are none, the abuse of which is more frequent or more dangerous than those in which the sublimity of the image serves to nourish presumption, or to encourage indolence. Accordingly the expressions in which Scripture has conveyed this figure are the passages most commonly quoted by all fanatical sects, as giving countenance to their bold imagination of an immediate intercourse with heaven. They have sometimes also been alleged in vindication of Antinomian tenets. Much caution, therefore, is necessary when this figure is used in discourses addressed to the people, that they may never lose sight of that substantial connexion which it is meant to exhibit, and that the impression of their being distinct and accountable agents may never be swallowed up in the confused apprehension of a mystical union.

3. A third kind of phraseology, not uncommon in Scripture, and from thence transferred into theological systems, is that according to which adoption, a word of the Roman law, which expressed a practice recognised in former times as legal, is applied to the superlative goodness manifested in the gospel. Some Christians consider this phrase as marking nothing more than that those religious privileges, upon account of which Israel is called in the Old Testament the son,

the first born of God, are now extended to the nations or large societies of men descended from heathen ancestors, to whom the gospel is published. Others consider it as marking that imitation of the Supreme Being, of which faith in the revelation of the gospel is the principle, and by which, becoming "followers of God as dear children," we attain that moral excellence to which the gospel was designed to exalt human nature. But the greater part of Christians consider the adoption spoken of in the New Testament as including besides both these meanings, a particular view of the change made upon the condition of all that are justified; who, although they "were enemies by wicked works," became through faith in Jesus the children of God, are received into his family, are placed under his immediate protection, are led by his counsel and his Spirit, have access to him at all times, and possess that security of obtaining eternal life, which arises from its being their inheritance as the sons of God. It is obvious that while this phrase, thus understood, presents a comprehensive and delightful view of the blessings which belong to true Christians, it may also be improved to the purpose of enforcing the discharge of their duty by the most animating and endearing considerations; and when these two uses of the phrase are properly conjoined, there is none to be found in Scripture that is more significant.

4. There is a fourth kind of phraseology, which will require a fuller illustration than I have thought it necessary to bestow upon the others. It extends through a great part of what we are accustomed to call the system; many doctrines of which, although they appear at first sight far removed from it, are found, upon examination, to derive their peculiar complexion from the ideas upon which this phraseology proceeds. It is that, according to which the terms, the new covenant, and the covenant of grace, are applied as a name for the dispensation of the gospel.

SECTION I.

THE Greek word *διαθηκη* occurs often in the Septuagint, as the translation of a Hebrew word, which signifies covenant; it occurs also in the gospels and the epistles; and it is rendered in our English Bibles sometimes covenant, sometimes testament. The Greek word, according to its etymology, and according to classical use, may denote a testament, a disposition, as well as a covenant; and the gospel may be called a testament, because it is a signification of the will of our Saviour ratified by his death, and because it conveys blessings to be enjoyed after his death. These reasons for giving the dispensation of the gospel the name of a testament appeared to our translators so striking, that they have rendered *διαθηκη* more frequently by the word testament, than by the word covenant. Yet the train of argument, where *διαθηκη* occurs, generally appears to proceed upon its meaning a covenant; and therefore, although, when we delineate the nature of the gospel, the beautiful idea of its being a testament is not to be lost sight of, yet we are to remember that the word testament, which

we read in the gospels and epistles, is the translation of a word, which the sense requires to be rendered covenant. When Jesus instituted the Lord's supper, he said, "This cup is ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματι μου, or το αἷμα τῆς καινῆς διαθήκης. As these words are applied to that which he intended to be a memorial of his death, there may seem to be a peculiar propriety in rendering διαθήκη, as our translators have there done, by the word testament. But it is to be observed, that καινὴ διαθήκη implies a reference to a former, which is often called in the epistles παλαιά or πρῶτη διαθήκη. Now there was nothing in the παλαιά διαθήκη analogous to the notion of testament. And, therefore, although to the καινὴ διαθήκη there did supervene this peculiar and interesting circumstance, that the blessings therein promised are conveyed by the death of a testator, yet the contrast between the παλαιά and καινὴ διαθήκη would be better marked, if the substantive were rendered by a word, which is equally proper when applied to both adjectives, rather than by a word, which, however fitly it corresponds to one of them, cannot, without a considerable stretch of meaning, be joined to the other. In the passage, Heb. ix. 15, 16, 17, the apostle appears, by our translation, to found an argument upon an allusion to the classical meaning of διαθήκη, as signifying a testament. But so far is there from being any necessity for translating it testament in this place, that the reasoning of the apostle is more pertinent and forcible, when covenant, the common rendering of the word, is retained. The following is Dr. Macknight's translation of these three verses: "And for this reason, of the new covenant he is the mediator, that his death being accomplished for the redemption of the transgressions of the first covenant, the called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a covenant [is made by sacrifice] there is a necessity that the death of the appointed sacrifice be brought in. For a covenant is firm over dead sacrifices, seeing it never hath force whilst the appointed sacrifice liveth."

A covenant implies two parties, and mutual stipulations. The new covenant must derive its name from something in the nature of the stipulations between the parties different from that which existed before; so that we cannot understand the propriety of the name καινὴ, without looking back to what is called the παλαιά, or πρῶτη. On examining the passages in Gal. iii. in 2 Cor. iii. and in Heb. viii. ix. x. where παλαιά and καινὴ διαθήκη are contrasted, it will be found that παλαιά διαθήκη means the dispensation given by Moses to the children of Israel; and καινὴ διαθήκη, the dispensation of the gospel published by Jesus Christ; and that the object of the apostle is to illustrate the superior excellence of the latter dispensation. But, in order to preserve the consistency of the apostle's writings, it is necessary to remember that there are two different lights in which the former dispensation may be viewed. Christians appear to draw the line between παλαιά and καινὴ διαθήκη, according to the light in which they view that dispensation. It may be considered merely as a method of publishing the moral law to a particular nation; and then with whatever solemnity it was delivered, and with whatever cordiality it was accepted, it is not a covenant that could give life. For being nothing more than what divines call a covenant of works, a directory of conduct requiring by its nature entire personal obedience, promising life

to those who yielded that obedience, but making no provision for transgressors, it left under a curse "every one that continued not in all things that were written in the book of the law to do them." This is the essential imperfection of what is called the covenant of works, the name given in theology to that transaction, in which it is conceived that the Supreme Lord of the universe promised to his creature man, that he would reward that obedience to his law, which, without any such promise, was due to him as the Creator. It is understood in the Calvinistic system that this covenant was entered into with Adam, as the representative of the human race. It is allowed by those who deny this representation, that a covenant of works is entered into with every one of the children of Adam by the condition of his being; for "the gentiles show the work of the law written in their hearts." And they who regard the covenant made with Israel at Mount Sinai, which has been called the Sinaitic covenant, as nothing more than a manner of giving the moral law with peculiar circumstances of splendour and majesty, consider the following epithets which occur in the writings of Paul, as applicable in their full meaning to the whole of the Mosaic dispensation; "weak through the flesh,"* *i. e.* not containing a provision for the salvation of men suited to the necessity of their nature; "unprofitable, making nothing perfect;"† "the ministration of death."‡

But although some sects of Christians have chosen to rest in this view of the Mosaic dispensation, there is another view of it opened to us in Scripture. No sooner had Adam broken the covenant of works, than a promise of a final deliverance from the evils incurred by the breach of it was given. This promise was the foundation of that transaction which Almighty God, in treating with Abraham, condescends to call "my covenant with thee," and which, upon this authority, has received in theology the name of the Abrahamic covenant. Upon the one part, Abraham, whose faith was counted to him for righteousness, received this charge from God, "walk before me and be thou perfect;" upon the other part, the God whom he believed, and whose voice he obeyed, besides promising other blessings to him and his seed, uttered these significant words, "in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

In this transaction then there was the essence of a covenant, for there were mutual stipulations between two parties; and there was superadded, as a seal of the covenant, the rite of circumcision, which, being prescribed by God, was a confirmation of his promise to all who complied with it, and being submitted to by Abraham, was, on his part, an acceptance of the covenant.

The Abrahamic covenant appears, from the nature of the stipulations, to be more than a covenant of works; and as it was not confined to Abraham, but extended to his seed, it could not be disannulled by any subsequent transactions, which fell short of a fulfilment of the blessing promised. The law of Moses, which was given to the seed of Abraham four hundred and thirty years after, did not come up to the terms of that covenant even with regard to them, for in its form it was a covenant of works, and to other nations it did not

* Rom. viii. 3.

† Heb. vii. 18, 19.

‡ 2 Cor. iii. 7.

directly convey any blessings. But although the Mosaic dispensation did not fulfil the Abrahamic covenant, it was so far from setting that covenant aside, that it cherished the expectation of its being fulfilled : for it continued the rite of circumcision, which was the seal of the covenant ; and in those ceremonies which it enjoined, there was a shadow, a type, an obscure representation of the promised blessing. Accordingly, many who lived under the *παλαια διαθηκη* were justified by faith in a Saviour who was to come. The nation of Israel considered themselves as the children of the covenant made with Abraham ; and when the Messiah was born, his birth was regarded by devout Jews as a performance of the mercy promised to their fathers in remembrance of the holy covenant made with Abraham.*

Here, then, is another view of the Mosaic dispensation. "It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made."† By delivering a moral law which men felt themselves unable to obey, by denouncing judgments which it did not of itself provide any effectual method of escaping, and by holding forth in various oblations the promised and expected Saviour, "it was a schoolmaster to bring men unto Christ." The covenant made with Abraham retained its force during the dispensation of the law, and was the end of that dispensation. And the particular manner of administering this covenant, which the wisdom of God chose to continue for a long course of ages, is called *παλαια διαθηκη*. When the purposes for which this manner was chosen were accomplished, *παλαια διαθηκη*, "waxing old, vanished away ;" and there succeeded that other method of administering the covenant, which, in respect of the facility of all the observances, the simplicity and clearness with which the blessings are exhibited, and the extent to which they are promulgated, is called *καινη διαθηκη* ; but which is so far from being opposite to *παλαια διαθηκη*, or essentially different from it, that it is in substance the very Gospel which was "preached before unto Abraham," and was embraced by all those who "walked in the steps of his faith."

Writers upon theology, sometimes from a difference in general principles, and sometimes from a desire to elucidate the subject by introducing a new language, have differed in the application of the terms now mentioned. But the views which have been given furnish the grounds upon which we defend that established language, which is familiar to our ears, that there are only two covenants essentially different, and opposite to one another, the covenant of works, made with the first man, intimated by the constitution of human nature to every one of his posterity, and having for its terms, "Do this and live ;"—and the covenant of grace, which was the substance of the Abrahamic covenant, and which entered into the constitution of the Sinaitic covenant, but which is more clearly revealed and more extensively published in the gospel.

This last covenant, which the Scriptures call new in respect of the mode of its dispensation under the gospel, although it is not new in respect of its essence, has received, in the language of theology, the name of the covenant of grace, for the two following obvious reasons ; because, after man had broken the covenant of works, it was pure

* Luke i. 72, 73.

† Gal. iii. 19.

grace or favour in the Almighty to enter into a new covenant with him; and because by the covenant there is conveyed that grace, which enables man to comply with the terms of it. It could not be a covenant unless there were terms—something required, as well as something promised or given,—duties to be performed, as well as blessings to be received. Accordingly, the tenor of the new covenant, founded upon the promise originally made to Abraham, is expressed by Jeremiah in words which the apostle to the Hebrews has quoted as a description of it; “I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people :”^{*}—words, which intimate, on one part, not only entire reconciliation with God, but the continued exercise of all the perfections of the Godhead in promoting the happiness of his people, and the full communication of all the blessings which flow from his unchangeable love; on the other part, the surrender of the heart and affections of his people, the dedication of all the powers of their nature to his service, and the willing uniform obedience of their lives. But, although there are mutual stipulations, the covenant retains its character of a covenant of grace, and must be regarded as having its source purely in the grace of God. For the very circumstances which rendered the new covenant necessary take away the possibility of there being any merit upon our part: the faith by which the covenant is accepted is the gift of God; and all the good works by which Christians continue to keep the covenant, originate in that change of character which is the fruit of the operation of his Spirit. By the conditions of the covenant of grace, therefore, are meant, not any circumstances in our character and conduct which may be regarded as inducements moving God to enter into a new covenant with us, but purely those expressions of thankfulness which naturally proceed from the persons with whom God has made this covenant, which are the effects and evidences of the grace conveyed to their souls, and the indispensable qualifications for the complete and final participation of the blessings of the covenant. With this caution, we scruple not to say that there are conditions in the covenant of grace, and we press upon Christians the fulfilment of the conditions on their part: although this is a language which some of the first reformers, in their zeal against popery, and their solicitude to avoid its errors, thought it dangerous to hold, and which, unless it be properly explained, still sounds offensive in the ears of particular descriptions of men.

The question concerning the extent of the covenant of grace turns upon points that have been already explained.[†] The difference of opinion between the advocates for universal and particular redemption does not respect the number who shall be saved. For whether God intended to make the covenant of grace with all men, or whether he intended to make it only with those, whom from the beginning he elected, it is allowed, on both sides, that they only are saved who accept of the covenant.

^{*} Heb. viii. 10.

[†] Book iv. ch. 6.

SECTION II.

It is one most important circumstance in the constitution of the covenant of grace, that it was made through the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Thence arises the term Mediator, in the use of which all Christians agree, because it is frequently applied to him in the New Testament; but concerning the meaning and import of which they differ widely.

Jesus is called in Scripture μεσίτης, μεσίτης Θεου καὶ ἀνθρώπων, διαθήκης κρείττονος, καὶνῆς, νεᾶς, μεσίτης.* The word μεσίτης literally means a person in the middle, between two parties; and the fitness of there being a mediator of the covenant of grace arises from this, that the nature of the covenant implies that the two parties were at variance. Those, who hold the Socinian principles with regard to the nature of the remedy, understand mediator to mean nothing more than a messenger sent from God to give assurance of forgiveness to his offending creatures. Those, who hold the doctrine of the atonement, understand that Jesus is called the mediator of the new covenant, because he reconciles the two parties, by having appeased the wrath of God which man had deserved; and by subduing that enmity to God by which their hearts were alienated from him. It is plain that this is being a mediator in the strict and proper sense of the word; and there seems to be no reason for resting in a meaning less proper and emphatical. This sense of the term mediator coincides with the meaning of another phrase applied to him, Heb. vii. 22, where he is called κρείττονος διαθήκης ἐγγυός. If he is a mediator in the last sense, then he is also ἐγγυός, the sponsor, the surety of the covenant. He undertook on the part of the Supreme Lawgiver, that the sins of those who repent shall be forgiven; and he fulfilled this undertaking, by offering in their stead a satisfaction to divine justice. He undertook on their part that they should keep the terms of the covenant; and he fulfils this undertaking by the influence of his Spirit upon their hearts.

From this high sense of the term mediator, in which the general strain of the New Testament seems to warrant us to understand that word, there arises what are commonly called the three offices, upon account of his holding which, by the designation of God, Jesus is emphatically styled the Christ, or the anointed. The three offices of Christ are familiar to the hearers of the gospel from the instruction of our Catechism: they are generally acceptable as subjects of preaching: and they may be improved so as to furnish matter for useful and excellent discourses. The meaning which we affix to the word mediator suggests the following, as the most natural order of stating the three offices. The Christ is a priest, who offered on the cross a true and perfect sacrifice, by which he has purchased forgiveness for all that repent; he is a prophet, who publishes what the apostle calls “the word of reconciliation,” or the terms of the new covenant; and

* 1 Tim. ii. 5. Heb. viii. 6; ix. 15; xii. 24.

he is a king, who establishes his throne in the hearts of his people, inclines them to accept of the covenant, enables them to fulfil its terms, and has power to confer upon them all its blessings.

If a mediator be essential to the covenant of grace, and if all who have been saved from the time of the first transgression were saved by that covenant, it follows that the mediator of the new covenant acted in that character before he was manifested in the flesh. Hence the importance of that doctrine respecting the person of Christ; that all the communications which the Almighty condescended to hold with the human race were carried on from the beginning by this person, that it is he who spake to the patriarchs, who gave the law by Moses, and who is called in the Old Testament the Angel of the covenant.* The views which we have now attained of the remedy provided for the moral condition of the human race, open to us the full importance of a doctrine, which manifestly unites in one faith all who obtain deliverance from that condition. For according to this doctrine, not only did the virtue of the blood which he shed as a priest extend to the ages past before his manifestation, but all the intimations of the new covenant established in his blood were given by him as the great prophet, and the blessings of the covenant were applied in every age by the Spirit, which he as the king of his people sends forth.

The Socinians, who consider Jesus as a mere man, having no existence till he was born of Mary, necessarily reject the doctrine now stated. And the church of Rome, although they admit the divinity of our Saviour, yet by the system which they hold with regard to the mediation of Christ, agree with the Socinians in throwing out of the dispensations of the grace of God, that beautiful and complete unity which arises from their having been conducted by one person. The church of Rome considers Christ as mediator, only in respect of his human nature. As that nature did not exist till he was born of Mary, they do not think it possible that he could exercise the office of mediator under the Old Testament; and as they admit that a mediator is essential to the covenant of grace, they believe that those who lived under the Old Testament, not enjoying the benefit of his mediation, did not obtain complete remission of sins. They suppose, therefore, that persons in former times who believed in a Saviour that was to come, and who obtained justification with God by this faith, were detained after death in a place of the infernal regions, which received the name of *Limbus Patrum*; a kind of prison where they did not endure punishment, but remained without partaking of the joys of heaven, in earnest expectation of the coming of Christ, who after suffering on the cross, descended to hell that he might set them free. This fanciful system has no other foundation than the slender support, which it appears to receive from some obscure passages of Scripture that admit of another interpretation. But if Christ acted as the mediator of the covenant of grace from the time of the first transgression, this system becomes wholly unnecessary; and we may believe, according to the general strain of Scripture, and what we account the analogy of faith, that all who "died in faith" since the

* Book iii. ch. 5.

world began entered immediately after death into that "heavenly country which they desired."

Although the members of the church of Rome adopt the language of Scripture, in which Jesus is styled the mediator of the new covenant, they differ from all Protestants in acknowledging other mediators; and the use, which they make of the doctrine that Christ is mediator only in his human nature, is to justify their admitting those who had no other nature to share that office with him. Saints, martyrs, and especially the Virgin Mary, are called *mediatores secundarii*, because it is conceived that they hold this character under Christ, and that, by virtue of his mediation, the superfluity of their merits may be applied to procure acceptance with God for our imperfect services. Under this character supplications and solemn addresses are presented to them; and the *mediatores secundarii* receive in the church of Rome, not only the honour due to eminent virtue, but a worship and homage which that church wishes to vindicate from the charge of idolatry, by calling it the same kind of inferior and secondary worship which is offered to the man Christ Jesus, who in his human nature acted as mediator.

In opposition to all this, we hold that Jesus Christ was qualified to act as mediator by the union between his divine and his human nature; that his divine nature gave an infinite value to all that he did, rendering it effectual for the purpose of reconciling us to God, while the condescension by which he approached to man, in taking part of flesh and blood, fulfilled the gracious intention for which a mediator was appointed; that the introducing any other mediator is unnecessary, derives no warrant from Scripture, and is derogatory to the honour of him who is there called the "one mediator between God and men;" and that as the union of the divine to the human nature is the foundation of that worship, which in Scripture is often paid to the mediator of the new covenant, this worship does not afford the smallest countenance to the idolatry and will-worship of those, who ascribe divine honours to any mortal.

SECTION III.

PRAYER is the natural expression of the sentiments of a dependent creature. But the dispensation of the Gospel, as a covenant of grace, furnishes a striking illustration of the obligation to prayer in general, the propriety of the several parts of it, and the encouragements to the regular performance of this duty. The inestimable value of the blessings conveyed by this covenant, the unmerited love from which they proceed, and the bright display of the divine perfections in the method of conferring them, quicken all those feelings of piety and gratitude to God, with which it is the privilege of the human heart to glow, and call for the most devout adoration, and the warmest thanksgiving. The intimate relations by which the covenant of grace connects Christians with one another, as well as with their common Father, produce intercessions, those expressions of benevolence in which they commend one another to his care. The consciousness of

that imperfection which is inseparable from human nature, and of those sins which we daily commit, draws forth humble confessions, and supplications in the presence of Him, who “is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.” The sense of our own inability to discharge our duty, and the desire of obtaining that heavenly aid which is promised to them that ask it, give the form of petition to all our purposes of obedience ; and the hope of those future blessings of the covenant, to which we are conducted by that obedience, imparts to the thoughts and affections that degree of elevation, which seeks for intercourse with heaven.

There is a vulgar notion concerning prayer, which is derogatory to the character of the Almighty, that our importunity can extort blessings from him, and produce a change in his counsels. This notion is unreasonable, and directly opposite to the principles upon which the Calvinistic doctrine of the covenant of grace proceeds. Yet every consideration suggested by the light of nature, which shows prayer to be a duty, is very much enforced by the Calvinistic doctrine ; and all the fervour which the Scripture recommends in performing the duty appears, upon the principles of that doctrine, to be highly reasonable, as proceeding from that state of mind, which enters into the character of those with whom God has made the covenant of grace, as cherishing and improving that character, as being the preparation for their receiving his blessings, and as an indispensable condition, which for their sakes he has required. Accordingly our Lord, while he corrects different errors concerning prayer, which proceed from unworthy conceptions of the Deity, delivers a form of prayer so conceived, as to imply that we are to pray to God daily, and full of instruction as to the manner of discharging that duty. This instruction, the exposition of which occupies a considerable part of the catechism of our church, is unfolded in every system of theology.

The humility and self-abasement, formed by all the discoveries of the Gospel, might either restrain the mind from approaching the Almighty, or tincture all its devotions with a spirit of dejection and melancholy, were not this tendency counterbalanced by the character under which the mediator of the covenant of grace is revealed. It is said that “he maketh intercession for us ;”^{*} he is called “our advocate with the Father ;”[†] and we are commanded to pray in his name.[‡]

We must be careful to separate from our notions of the intercession of Christ all those circumstances of tears, of earnest crying, and of prostration before his Father, which would degrade him to the condition of a suppliant, and also every idea of his being uncertain with regard to the issue of the applications which he makes. The intercession of Christ proceeds upon the inexhaustible merit of his sacrifice ; it is accomplished by his appearing in the presence of God for us, and offering our prayers and services to the Father : and, being the intercession of him who has power to give eternal life to as many as he will, it cannot fail of being effectual to the purpose of procuring for his people all those blessings which he chooses to bestow. The intercession of Christ, understood with these qualifications, is agreeable to

^{*} Rom. viii. 34.

[†] 1 John ii. 1.

[‡] John xvi. 23.

the analogy of the whole scheme of salvation, which is uniformly represented as originating in the love of the Father, but as reaching us only through the mediation of the Son; and it is obvious to observe that a doctrine, which teaches that our prayers are heard, and our services accepted, not upon account of any thing in us, but purely upon account of the righteousness of him, “in whom the Father is well pleased,” while it illustrates the majesty and holiness of the Supreme Ruler, affords an encouragement most graciously accommodated to the infirmities and sentiments of those, for whom Christ “maketh intercession.”

The nature and the grounds of that entire dependence upon the Lord Jesus, which Christians are everywhere taught to maintain, expose the grossness and the folly of those errors which lead the church of Rome to address the Virgin Mary, departed saints, and angels, as intercessors with God. It is said, in extenuation of these errors, that the unrivalled dignity of the Lord Jesus is preserved by calling him *mediator primarius*, *mediator redemptionis*, while others are only *mediatores secundarii*, *mediatores intercessionis*; and it is alleged by those who address to the *mediatores intercessionis* such words as *ora pro nobis*, that the prayers which they solicit are only a continuation in heaven of the intercessions which good men offer for one another upon earth. But the answer to all these pleas is obvious. The Scriptures give no warrant for the distinction between *mediator primarius* and *mediatores secundarii*. Christ is *mediator intercessionis* because he is *mediator redemptionis*; and, upon this account, his intercession is effectual. The intercessions of Christians upon earth are an expression of benevolence—of an earnest desire of the happiness of others, called forth by scenes which they behold, but not implying any presumption, that what others are unworthy to receive will be given because it is asked by us; whereas to solicit the intercession of the inhabitants of heaven is unmeaning, unless we suppose that they have a knowledge of our condition, and that they have power with God,—that kind of merit which can insure their application for us being heard. Both parts of this supposition being gratuitously assumed, the addresses offered in the church of Rome to the *mediatores secundarii* only weaken the sense of dependence upon the mediator of the new covenant, the “King of Saints” and the head of the “innumerable company of angels,” the Son of God, through whom Christians “have access to the Father;” and such addresses, after the example of the heathen mythology, divide the attention and the worship of Christians amidst a multitude of inferior beings, to whom, without any warrant, they may choose to ascribe certain degrees of power and influence, and thus introduce what the apostle calls “will-worship.”*

* Col. ii. 23.

SECTION IV.

It is usual for covenants amongst men to be confirmed by certain solemnities. In the simplicity of ancient times, the solemnities were monuments or large stones erected as a witness of the transaction, and meetings at stated times between the parties or their descendants, in commemoration of it.* In more advanced periods of society, the solemnities have become deeds written in a formal style, sealed, delivered, and exchanged between the parties at the time of the contract, and remaining, till they are cancelled, as vouchers of the original transaction. As circumcision was ordained as the token and seal of the covenant with Abraham, we are led to expect that, when the Almighty published the covenant of grace by his Son, and invited all nations to enter into it, he would, with the same condescension to human weakness, grant some confirmation of the grace therein manifested, some sensible sign which might establish a reliance upon his promise, and constitute the ground of a federal act between him and his creatures. A great part of the Christian world consider this as the intention of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the two solemn rites of our religion, which are commonly known by the name of Sacraments.

This name is nowhere applied to these rites in Scripture. *Sacramentum*, being a word of Latin extraction, could not be introduced into theology by the original language, in which the books of the New Testament were written; and in all the places of the Vulgate, or old Latin translation of the Bible, it is put for the Greek word *μυστήριον*. Dr. Campbell, in his Preliminary Dissertation to a New Translation of the Gospel, has discussed the different applications of the words *μυστήριον* and *sacramentum*; and he has clearly shown that *μυστήριον* always means either a secret, something unknown till it was revealed; or the latent spiritual meaning of some fable, emblem, or type. Now, in both these senses *μυστήριον* is rendered in the Vulgate *sacramentum*, although when we attend to the etymology of the two words, they do not appear to correspond. *Μεγα εστι μυστήριον ευσεβειας: magnum est sacramentum pietatis: το μυστήριον των ἑπτα αστρων, sacramentum septem stellarum*; the hidden meaning of the seven stars. But although Scripture does not warrant the application now made of the word sacrament, it has the sanction of very ancient practice. As some of the most sacred and retired parts of the ancient heathen worship were called mysteries, there is reason to think that the word *μυστήρια* was early applied to the Lord's Supper, which, from the beginning, Christians regarded with much reverence, which, in times of persecution, they were obliged to celebrate in private, and from which they were accustomed to exclude both those who had been guilty of notorious sins, and those who had not attained sufficient knowledge. The Latin word *sacramentum* followed this application of the Greek word; and if Pliny is correct in the information he

* Genesis and Joshua, *passim*.

conveys in his letter to Trajan, concerning the Christians in the end of the first century, his expression may suggest that there was conceived to be a peculiar propriety in giving this name to the Lord's Supper, from the analogy between the engagement to abstain from sin, which those who partook of that rite contracted, and the military oath of fidelity, which was known in classical writers by the name *sacramentum*.

It appears, then, that the word, in the sense in which it is now used, is an ecclesiastical, not a scriptural word, and that the amount of that sense is to be gathered, not from the original meaning of the word, but from the practice of those with whom it occurs. For from the etymology nothing more can be deduced, than that a sacrament is something, either a word or an action, connected with what is sacred; and this is equally true, whether we annex to it the Popish sense, the Socinian sense, or the sense in which it is understood by the greater part of the reformed churches.

Sacraments are conceived in the church of Rome to consist of matter, deriving, from the action of the priest in pronouncing certain words, a divine virtue, by which grace is conveyed to the soul of every person who receives them. It is supposed to be necessary that the priest, in pronouncing the words, has the intention of giving to the matter that divine virtue, otherwise it remains in its original state. On the part of those who receive the sacrament, it is required that they be free from any of those sins called in the church of Rome mortal; but it is not required of them to exercise any good disposition, to possess faith, or to resolve that they shall amend their lives. For such is conceived to be the physical virtue of a sacrament, administered by a priest with a good intention, that, unless when it is opposed by the obstacle of a mortal sin, the very act of receiving it is sufficient. This act was called, in the language of the school, *opus operatum*, the work done, independently of any disposition of mind attending the deed; and the superiority of the sacraments of the New Testament, over the sacraments of the Old, was thus expressed, that the sacraments of the Old Testament were effectual *ex opere operantis*, from the piety and faith of the persons to whom they were administered; while the sacraments of the New Testament convey grace, *ex opere operato*, from their own intrinsic virtue, and an immediate physical influence upon the mind of him who receives them.

The arguments opposed to this doctrine by the first reformers will readily occur to your minds, from the simple exposition of it which I have given. It represents the sacraments as a mere charm, the use of which, being totally disjoined from every mental exercise, cannot be regarded as a reasonable service. It gives men the hope of receiving, by the use of a charm, the full participation of the grace of God, although they continue to indulge that very large class of sins, to which the accommodating morality of the church of Rome extends the name of venial; and yet it makes this high privilege entirely dependent upon the intention of another, who, although he performs all the outward acts which belong to the sacraments, may, if he chooses, withhold the communication of that physical virtue, without which the sacrament is of none avail.

The Socinian doctrine concerning the nature of the sacraments is

founded upon a sense of the absurdity and danger of the popish doctrine and a solicitude to avoid any approach to it, and runs into the opposite extreme. It is conceived that the sacraments are not essentially distinct from any other rites or ceremonies; that as they consist of a symbolical action, in which something external and material is employed to represent what is spiritual and invisible, they may by this address to the senses be of use in reviving the remembrance of past events, and in cherishing pious sentiments; but that their effect is purely moral, and that they contribute by that moral effect to the improvement of the individual in the same manner with reading the Scriptures, and many other exercises of religion. It is admitted, indeed, by the Socinians, that the sacraments are of further advantage to the whole society of Christians, as being the solemn badges by which the disciples of Jesus are discriminated from other men, and the appointed method of declaring that faith in Christ, by the public profession of which Christians minister to the improvement of one another. But in these two points, the moral effect upon the individual, and the advantage to society, is contained all that a Socinian holds concerning the general nature of the sacraments.

This doctrine is infinitely more rational than the popish, more friendly to the interests of morality, and consequently more honourable to the religion of Christ. But, like all the other parts of the Socinian system, it represents that religion in the simple view of being a lesson of righteousness, and loses sight of that character of the gospel, which is meant to be implied in calling it a covenant of grace. The greater part of Protestants, therefore, following an expression of the apostle, Rom. iv. 11, when he is speaking of circumcision, consider the sacraments as not only signs, but also seals of the covenant of grace.

Those who apply this phrase to the sacraments of the New Testament admit every part of the Socinian doctrine concerning the nature of sacraments, and are accustomed to employ that doctrine to correct those popish errors upon this subject, which are not yet eradicated from the minds of many of the people. But although they admit that the Socinian doctrine is true as far as it goes, they consider it as incomplete. For while they hold that the sacraments yield no benefit to those, upon whom the signs employed in them do not produce the proper moral effect, they regard these signs as intended to represent an inward invisible grace, which proceeds from him by whom they are appointed, and as pledges that that grace will be conveyed to all in whom the moral effect is produced. The sacraments, therefore, in their opinion, constitute federal acts, in which the persons who receive them with proper dispositions, solemnly engage to fulfil their part of the covenant, and God confirms his promise to them in a sensible manner; not as if the promise of God were of itself insufficient to render any event certain, but because this manner of exhibiting the blessings promised gives a stronger impression of the truth of the promise, and conveys to the mind an assurance that it will be fulfilled.

According to this account of the sacraments, the express institution of God is essentially requisite to constitute their nature; and in this respect sacraments are distinguished from what may be called the

ceremonies of religion. Ceremonies are in their nature arbitrary; and different means may be employed by different persons with success, according to their constitution, their education, and their circumstances, to cherish the sentiments of devotion, and to confirm good purposes. But no rite which is not ordained by God can be conceived to be a seal of his promise, or the pledge of any event that depends upon his good pleasure. Hence that any rite may come up to our idea of a sacrament, we require in it not merely a vague and general resemblance between the external matter which is the visible substance of the rite, and the thing thereby signified, but also words of institution, and a promise by which the two are connected together: and hence we reject five of the seven sacraments that are numbered in the church of Rome, because in some of the five we do not find any matter, without which there is not that sign which enters into our definition of a sacrament; and in others we do not find any promise connecting the matter used with the grace said to be thereby signified, although upon this connexion the essence of a sacrament depends.

Burnet's exposition of the 25th article shows upon what grounds, and with what strict propriety the church of England says, "those five commonly called sacraments, that is to say, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, are not to be counted for sacraments of the gospel, being such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the apostles; partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not like nature of sacraments with baptism and the Lord's supper; for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained by God." In baptism and the Lord's supper, to which the name of sacraments is, according to our definition, limited, we find all which that definition requires. In each there is matter, an external visible substance; and there is also a positive institution authorising that substance to be used with certain words in a religious rite. And we think that both from the nature of the institution, and from the manner in which each sacrament is mentioned in other places of the New Testament, the two are not barely signs of invisible grace, or badges of the Christian profession, but were intended by him who appointed them to be pledges of that grace, and seals of the covenant by which it is conveyed.

Erskine's Dissertations.

Macknight's Preliminary Dissertations.

Leechman on Prayer.

CHAPTER VI.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING BAPTISM.

SECTION I.

THE washings and sprinklings, which formed part of the religious ceremonies of all nations, arose probably from a consciousness of impurity, and an opinion that innocence was acceptable to the gods; and they were originally intended, on the part of the worshippers, as a profession of their purpose to abstain, in future, from the pollutions which they had contracted. Those who were initiated into the mysteries of the heathen religion bathed, before their initiation, in a particular stream, where they were supposed to leave all their previous errors and defilements, and from which they entered pure into the belief of new opinions, and the participation of sacred rites. When any inhabitants of the countries adjoining to Judea turned from the worship of idols, and, professing their faith in the God of Israel, desired to be numbered as his servants among the proselytes to the law of Moses, they were baptized; and those who had formerly been held in abhorrence were, by this ceremony, admitted into a certain degree of communion with the peculiar people of God. When John appeared preaching in the land of Judea, he came baptizing, and his baptism was emphatically called the baptism of repentance, because the substance of his preaching was "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* The people who "went out to him and were baptized, confessing their sins," had been accustomed to wash from the errors of idolatry those who became proselytes to their law. But they themselves had need of washing, before they were admitted into the kingdom of the Messiah; and his days were the time of the fulfilment of that word which God spake by the mouth of Ezekiel: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you."†

In accommodation to this general practice, and to these peculiar opinions of the Jews, Jesus, as soon as he assumed the character of "a teacher sent from God," employed his apostles to baptize those who came to him: and having condescended, in this respect, to the

* Mark i. 4.

† Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

usage of the times while he remained upon earth, he introduced baptism into the last commission which he gave his apostles, in a manner which seems to intimate that he intended it to be the initiatory rite of his universal religion. Πορευθεντες ουν μαθητευσατε παντα τα εθνη, βαπτιζοντες αυτους. But in order to render it a distinguishing rite, by which his disciples should be separated from the disciples of any other teacher who might choose to baptize, he added these words, εις το ονομα του Πατρος και του Υιου και του αγιου Πνευματος.* Those who were baptized among the heathen were baptized in certain mysteries. The Jews are said by the apostle Paul to have been “baptized unto Moses,” at the time when they followed him through the Red Sea, as the servant of God sent to be their leader.† Those who went out to John “were baptized unto John’s baptism,” i. e. into the expectation of the person whom John announced, and into repentance of those sins which John condemned.”‡ Christians are “baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,” because in this expression is implied that whole system of truth which the disciples of Christ believe; into the name of the Father, the one true and living God whom Christians profess to serve; of the Son, that divine person revealed in the New Testament, whom the Father sent to be the Saviour of the world; of the Holy Ghost, the divine person also revealed there as the comforter, the sanctifier, and the guide of Christians.

As all who were baptized at the first appearance of Christianity had been educated in idolatry, or had known only that preparatory dispensation which the Jews enjoyed, it was necessary that they should be instructed in the meaning of that solemn expression which accompanied their Christian baptism. Accordingly, the practice of the apostles in administering baptism, judging by the few instances which the book of Acts has recorded, corresponds to the order intimated in the commission of our Lord, where the instruction that makes men disciples is supposed to precede baptism. Thus to the minister of the queen of Ethiopia Philip first “preached Jesus;” he then said, “if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest be baptized; and when the man answered, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Philip baptized him.”§ The following phrases, which occur in different epistles, “the form of sound words, the principles of the doctrine of Christ, the doctrine of baptism,” probably mean some such short summary of Christian doctrine, as we know was used in the age immediately succeeding that of the apostles, for the instruction of persons who came to be baptized. Peter’s joining to baptism, 1 Pet. iii. 21, συνειδησεως αγαθης επερωτημα εις Θεον seems to imply, that in the apostolic age questions were always proposed to them. And this is confirmed by the expression, Heb. x. 22, “having our bodies washed with pure water, let us hold fast the profession of our faith:” the most natural interpretation of which words is, that persons at their baptism were required to make a declaration of their faith; and we know that, if not from the beginning, yet in very early times, there

* Matt. xxviii. 19.

‡ Acts xix. 3.

† 1 Cor. x. 2.

§ Acts viii. 35—38.

was joined with this declaration a renunciation of former vices, and a promise to lead a good life.

It appears from this deduction that baptism was, in its original institution, a solemn method of assuming the profession of the Christian religion, a mark of distinction between the disciples of Jesus, and those who held any other system of faith. Socinus and some of his followers, confining themselves to this single view of baptism, consider it as an institution highly proper at the first planting of the Christian Church, which was formed out of idolaters and Jews, but as superseded in all Christian countries by the establishment and general profession of Christianity. For it appears to them that what was intended merely for the purpose of being a discriminating rite, ceases of course, in circumstances where there is no need for a discrimination; and that the observance of it is of real importance only in those cases which we very rarely behold when persons who had been educated in another religion are converted to Christianity. Although the modern Socinians have not paid so much respect to the opinion of Socinus as to lay aside the use of baptism, yet their sentiments upon this point are much the same with his. "They would make no great difficulty," to use the words of Dr. Priestley, "of omitting it entirely in Christian families; but they do not think it of importance enough to act otherwise than their ancestors have done before them, in a matter of so great indifference."

The Quakers are the only sect of Christians who make no use of baptism; and their practice in this matter is only a particular application of their leading principles. It appears to them that, as it is the distinguishing character of the gospel to be the dispensation of the Spirit, and as every Christian is under the immediate guidance of an inward light, all the ordinances of former times only presignified that effusion of the Holy Ghost, which, in the age of the gospel, was to render the further use of them unnecessary. When John the Baptist says, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he that cometh after me, shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire," it appears to the Quakers, that John, by this contrast, means to represent his own baptism as emblematical of the baptism of Jesus, and to give notice that the baptism by water, which was the emblem, should cease as soon as the baptism with the Holy Ghost, which was the thing signified, should commence. The baptism with water practised by the apostles of Jesus, they regard as merely an accommodation to the prejudices of the times, till the spiritual nature of the gospel was understood; and they consider the miraculous effusion of the gifts of the Spirit upon the apostles at the day of Pentecost, which our Lord himself calls their being baptized with the Holy Ghost, and the visible descent of the Holy Ghost upon some of those who were baptized by the apostles, as affording the true interpretation of the word baptism, as it occurs in the discourses of our Lord. Hence they conclude that when he says in the commission given to his apostles, "Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them," he does not mean literally to command his apostles to plunge in water the bodies of all who should become his disciples, but he only uses a figurative expression, borrowed from the ancient emblematical prac-

tice, for that communication of the Spirit which in all ages was to form the characteristical distinction of his disciples.

Other Christians do not find this reasoning sufficient to warrant the conclusion which the Quakers draw from it : that the use of baptism is now to be laid aside. They do not admit the general principle that all emblems and symbols become unnecessary, as soon as the thing signified is come ; for this principle, if followed out to its full extent, would annihilate all religious ceremonies. With regard to the particular case of baptism, they consider the expression used in the commission given by our Lord, as interpreted to all Christians by the practice of baptizing with water, which the Apostles had used before they received the commission ; which they continued to use after it ; and which, upon their authority, and after their example, was invariably followed in the primitive church. In the commission, there do not appear to be any circumstances suggesting that the command was not to be universally obeyed, according to that literal meaning which the apostles seem to have given it ; or that there is any limitation of time, after which what was at first understood literally was to receive a figurative interpretation ; and accordingly, all other Christians, besides the Quakers, observe what they consider the explicit direction of our Lord, by employing baptism, in all situations of the church, as the initiatory rite of his religion.

In one circumstance respecting the mode of administering baptism, the greater part of Christians have departed from the primitive practice. Both sprinkling and immersion are implied in the word βαπτίζω ; both were used in the religious ceremonies of the Jews, and both may be considered as significant of the purpose of baptism, and as corresponding to the words in which the Scripture represents the spiritual blessings thereby signified. There is reason to believe that immersion was more commonly practised at the beginning. But as the numbers said in the Book of Acts to have been baptized at one time,* and the circumstances in which they received baptism, seem to suggest that even in those days, sprinkling was at some times used, the greater part of Christians have found themselves at liberty, in a matter very far from being essential, to adopt that practice which is most convenient, and most suited to the habits of colder climates.

To the administration of baptism, there is commonly annexed, after the custom of the Jews when a child was circumcised, the designing the persons baptized by a particular name. This is manifestly an addition to the directions given by our Lord, and consequently is not to be regarded as any part of baptism. A name might be given to a person at any other time as well as then. But the practice, of assuming the name by which we are commonly called at the time when we are initiated as the disciples of Christ, may serve to remind us of the obligations implied in the solemnity with which that name was given.

* Acts ii. 41.

SECTION II.

ALL who use baptism, consider it as the initiatory rite of Christianity, the solemn profession of the Christian faith. But this account of baptism, although true, appears to the greater part of Christians to be incomplete: and the grounds upon which they entertain a higher opinion of it are of the following kind.

Baptizing into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, while it certainly implies a profession of faith in them, also exhibits these three persons under certain characters, and in certain relations, which give an assurance of the communication of blessings to those who are thus baptized. Agreeably to this exhibition made in the form of baptism, are such expressions as these, “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved:”* “baptism saves us:”† “be baptized for the remission of sins:”‡ expressions which could not have been used unless there was an intimate connexion between this rite and the two characteristical blessings of the gospel, viz. forgiveness of sins, and the communication of inward grace. The apostle Paul, Rom. vi. 4, 5, 6, illustrates this connexion by an allusion drawn from the ancient method of administering baptism. The immersion in water of the bodies of those who were baptized is an emblem of that death unto sin, by which the conversion of Christians is generally expressed: the rising out of the water, the breathing the air again after having been for some time in another element, is an emblem of that new life, which Christians by their profession are bound, and by the power of their religion are enabled to lead. The time during which they remained under the water is a kind of temporary death, after the image of the death of Christ, during which they deposited under the stream the sins of which the old man was composed: when they emerged from the water, they rose, after the image of his resurrection, to a life of righteousness here, and a life of glory hereafter. Here is a significant representation both of what the baptized persons engaged to do, and also of the grace by which their sins were forgiven, and the strength communicated to their souls: so that the action of baptism, as interpreted by an apostle, rises from being a profession of faith, a mere external rite, to be a federal act, by which the mutual stipulations of the covenant of grace are confirmed. Accordingly, the same apostle represents baptism as coming in place of circumcision. For to the Galatians, to whom he thus writes, v. 2, 3, “I Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing; for I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to the whole law,” he says, iii. 27, “as many of you, as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.” And to the Colossians, ii. 11, 12, he proves that circumcision was no longer necessary, by this argument, that their being buried with Christ in baptism was emblematical of that change of life, and that internal purity, which the rite of circumcision was meant to signify to the Jews.

* Mark xvi. 16.

† 1 Peter iii. 21.

‡ Acts ii. 38.

But the sign of circumcision is called by the apostle, Rom. iv. 11, "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which Abraham had," i. e. a seal of his faith being counted to him for righteousness; and as the use of the sign was appointed for his posterity, it was to them also a seal of the covenant, confirming, to all who received it, their share in the promise made to Abraham. If baptism, therefore, supply under the gospel the place of circumcision under the law, and bring Christians under the same obligations to Christ, as circumcision brought the Jews to the law, it must also imply the same security and pledge for the blessings conveyed by Christ.

These are the grounds upon which the greater part of Christians think the Socinian account of baptism incomplete. They agree with the Socinians in considering it as a solemn method of assuming the profession of Christianity; as a ceremony intended to produce a moral effect upon the minds of those who partake of it, or who behold it administered to others, and as in this respect most salutary and useful. But they consider it as possessing, besides both these characters, the higher character of a sacrament, an outward sign of an invisible grace, a seal of the new covenant.

However well founded this opinion may appear to be, much care is necessary to separate it from the errors of the church of Rome, who, applying to baptism their general doctrine concerning the nature of the sacraments, run into another extreme more dangerous and more irrational than the Socinian.

The church of Rome considers baptism, when administered by a priest having a good intention, as of itself applying the merits of Christ to the person baptized, with an efficacy sufficient to infuse into his mind a new character. Hence they deduce the absolute necessity of baptism in order to salvation, and the propriety of its being administered to a child who appears to be dying by any person present, if a priest is not at hand. Hence, too, their distinction between sins committed before and after baptism. The corruption inherited from Adam, and all the actual transgressions which a person may have committed before his baptism, are, it is said, completely annihilated by this sacrament; so that if the most abandoned person were to receive it for the first time *in articulo mortis*, all his sins would be washed away, and he would enter undefiled into another world: but all sins committed after baptism, after the infusion of that grace by the conveyance of which this sacrament constitutes a new character, must be expiated by the sacrament of penance. Some of them, however, may be of such a kind as nothing can expiate. In this way the church of Rome contrives to magnify the power of both sacraments, to find room for each without detracting from the other, and at the same time to keep the people in a continual dependence upon itself, by an uncertainty with regard to the extent of the remission of sins.

Many Christians, who do not hold the opinions of that church, seem to approach them in what they say of the immediate effect of baptism. They understand the words of our Lord to Nicodemus, "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," as declaring that no person can be admitted to heaven who has not been baptized; and from the language of

Paul, Titus iii. 6, "he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost," they conclude that a renovation of mind accompanies the act of baptism. Hence Augustine made a distinction between those who were regenerated and those who were predestinated. He maintained that all who received baptism were regenerated or born again, so as to be delivered from that corruption which the children of Adam inherit: but that unless they were predestinated, they did not persevere in that state to which they were regenerated. Many of the Lutheran churches have not departed so far from the doctrine of the church of Rome concerning baptism, as to renounce this distinction, but place the efficacy of the sacrament in a regeneration, by which faith is actually conveyed to the soul of an infant; and by consequence they hold baptism to be indispensably necessary. It is a remnant of the same doctrine in the minds of the people in this country, that produces the horror which they feel at the thought of a child dying unbaptized, or even living for a considerable time in that state. The liturgy, too, of the church of England, which, being formed soon after the Reformation, wisely studied to depart as little as possible from the ideas generally entertained, seems to proceed in this point on the language of Augustine. For it is said in the Catechism, that by baptism they who were "by nature born in sin are made the children of grace;" and in the office for baptism thanks are given to God, "that it hath pleased him to regenerate this infant with his Holy Spirit." Yet from both Burnet's Exposition of the thirty-nine Articles, and Secker's Lectures on the Catechism, books which are considered as standards in England, and which are useful to all clergymen, it appears that the church of England, far from approaching to the Popish idea of a charm wrought by baptism, agrees with us in holding the rational doctrine common to all the reformed churches with regard to the effect of this sacrament. This rational doctrine, which lies in the middle between the Popish and Socinian systems, may be thus shortly stated.

It is understood that all the external privileges and means of improvement, which belong to the members of the Christian church, are enjoyed by every person who has been baptized according to the institution of Christ; and it is hoped that every person, who by the outward act is entitled to the outward advantages of baptism, will also partake of the inward grace. At the same time, while we judge thus charitably of our brethren, we learn from the words of the apostle, Peter iii. 21, "that the putting away of the filth of the flesh" in baptism, the mere act of washing, does not save any person, unless it be accompanied with "the answer of a good conscience towards God." These words are directly opposite to the Popish idea of baptism working as a charm; and they seem to direct us to apply to this rite our general idea of the nature of a sacrament, by considering baptism as a federal act, in which those who make the sponson with sincerity on their part, receive a pledge and security that the blessings exhibited shall be conveyed to their souls. We conceive that these blessings are not the annihilation of past sins, and the immediate infusion of a new character; but the forgiveness of all sins of which they repent, and those continual supplies of grace, which are necessary to keep their souls from evil. We make no distinction,

therefore, as to the efficacy of baptism, between sins committed before, and sins committed after the administration of it. We think that the sin against the Holy Ghost, and a total apostacy from Christianity are unpardonable, not because they are committed after baptism, but because the very nature of these sins excludes that repentance without which they cannot be forgiven. We consider justification by faith, through the righteousness of Christ, as including a right to the remission of every sin that is repented of, as well as a deliverance from the curse entailed upon the posterity of Adam; and we regard baptism as by no means the physical instrument of that justification, but only as a seal of it vouchsafed to us by God. Hence, although we account it a presumptuous sin to despise the seal, yet, as the remission of sins rests upon the promise of God in Christ, we do not account the seal so indispensably necessary, as to render the promise void to those who have not the means of receiving baptism according to the original institution. We think, that if the words of our Lord to Nicodemus have any reference to baptism, they only mean that a man does not bear the profession of a Christian, which is called "entering into the kingdom of God," unless he submits to the rite appointed by the author of Christianity. We think, that when the apostle calls baptism "the washing of regeneration," he only employs a phraseology suggested by the sacramental relation between the sign and the thing signified; that as circumcision is called the covenant,* because it was the sign of the covenant, so baptism receives a name from that which is certainly conveyed to all, who perform their part in this federal act. We think, in the last place, that our Lord guards us against supposing that baptism is essential to salvation; for, when he says, Mark xvi. 16, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned;" he teaches, in the first clause, that baptism does not save us unless we believe; and by omitting the mention of baptism in the second clause, he seems to intimate that the want of it is not to be put upon a footing with the want of faith.

SECTION III.

To the view now given of the nature of this sacrament, there seems to arise an insurmountable objection from the practice of infant baptism. If baptism were merely a discriminating badge, we might conceive, according to the view which Dr. Priestley gives of this subject, that when a father brings his children in their earliest days to receive that badge, he exercises the *patria potestas*. If baptism were a charm communicating a certain virtue which might be received by a child as well as a man, we might conceive its being early administered to be important for the improvement of the moral character, and necessary for salvation in case of an untimely death. But if baptism be a federal act, there seems to be the strongest reason for its being delayed till the party, upon whose sponsions its efficacy with

* Acts vii. 8.

Gen. xvii. 13.

regard to himself entirely depends, shall understand the nature of the sponson. The intrinsic force of this argument against infant baptism appears to receive an accession of strength from its being observed, that all those, whose baptism is explicitly mentioned in Scripture, were persons capable of making that confession of faith, which our account of the ordinance implies. To the sect founded by Munzer, about the time of the Reformation, the practice appeared blameworthy for this further reason, that it admitted into the church of Christ, persons of whose future life no certain judgment could be formed. They were accustomed, therefore, to delay this solemn act of admission into the church till that advanced period of life, when the former behaviour of a person might be supposed to afford satisfying evidence of his being worthy of that privilege : and they received the name of Anabaptists, because, considering early baptism as premature, they rebaptized those members of other Christian societies whom they admitted into their communion.

The controversy concerning infant baptism has been discussed in many large treatises, and continues to be agitated with much keenness between the several branches of the ancient Anabaptists, and those who defend the established practice. The heads of the argument for that practice may be stated in a short compass.

God said to Abraham, “every man-child among you that is eight days old shall be circumcised.”* By this command circumcision, which was the initiatory rite of the Abrahamic covenant, and which is declared by Paul to be the sign and seal of that covenant,† was administered to infants. If the covenant of grace be the same in substance with the Abrahamic covenant, and if baptism comes in place of circumcision, the presumption is, that Jesus, by the general words, “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them,” meant that baptism also should be administered to infants. This presumption might indeed be destroyed by an express prohibition, or by a practice in Scripture directly opposite. But so far from any prohibition being given, there are many expressions in Scripture, which, although they would not of themselves warrant infant baptism, seem to intimate that the Jewish practice is to be followed. When Jesus, Mark x. 14, says to his disciples, who were rebuking those that brought young children to him, “suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God,” his expression is calculated to mislead, if the dispensation of the gospel was, in this respect, to be distinguished from the Mosaic, that it was not to comprehend little children. When Peter says, Acts ii. 38, 39, “Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ; for the promise is unto you and to your children,” he is speaking to Jews, who knew that the promise of Abraham was to them and to their children, and who would infer from his words that the blessings of the gospel and baptism, which they were exhorted to receive as the seal of those blessings, were no less extensive. And an expression of the apostle, 1 Cor. vii. 14, “now are your children holy,” seems to imply, that amongst Christians, as amongst Jews, there is a communication of the privileges of believers to their children. In con-

* Gen. xvii. 10, 12.

† Rom. iv. 11.

formity to this principle, we read that the apostles baptized those who believed, and their household, Acts xvi. 23, *εβαπτισθη αυτος και οι αυτου παντες*. We have reason to think that infant baptism was practised in very early ages of the Christian church; and, although many ideas concerning the indispensable necessity of baptism which we do not hold, may have contributed at different times to continue this practice, yet the principles upon which it rests are so universally acknowledged by Christians, that, with the exception of the different branches of Anabaptists, it has been uniformly observed.

It cannot be supposed by any reasonable person, that infants, at the time of their baptism, are brought under an obligation by an act which they do not understand. And yet to perform the act, and to rehearse the words without any corresponding obligation, would have the appearance of making baptism a charm. On this account, as under the Jewish law parents, through whom their children inherited the blessings of the covenant, brought them to be circumcised, so Christian parents originally brought their children to baptism; and being accustomed to engage for them in many civil transactions, they were accustomed also in this solemn action to make those declarations, which it was supposed the children would have made had they been possessed of understanding. When the parents were dead, or were incapable of acting, other persons appeared as sureties for the children, and there was thus introduced the practice, observed in the church of England, and in many other churches, of the children being presented by godfathers and godmothers, who are considered as sureties in addition to the parents. Our church, following out the dictates of nature, and the ideas upon which the children of those who believe are admitted to baptism, always requires the parents, unless they are disqualified, to present their children; and the nature of the sponsion made by them in this presentation is different from that prescribed in the church of England. There the godfathers and godmothers promise, in the name of the infant, "that he will renounce the devil and all his works, and constantly believe God's holy word, and obediently keep his commandments." With us, the parents do not make any promise for the child, but they promise for themselves, that nothing shall be wanting on their part to engage the child to undertake, at some future time, that obligation which he cannot then understand. The practice of our church, then, leads us to regard the baptism of infants as a provision for perpetuating the church of Christ, and transmitting his religion to the latest generations. It is a privilege which children, born of Christian parents, enjoy, that their receiving the most important of all instructions, a pious and virtuous education, is not left merely to discretion or natural affection, but is bound upon their parents by a solemn vow; and whatever other attention parents may bestow upon the health, the improvement, and advancement of their children, they are guilty of impiety if they do not fulfil this vow, by being careful to afford them every opportunity for acquiring just notions and favourable impressions of religion.

In whatever manner infant baptism has been administered, it rests with the children, after having enjoyed the advantages which flow from the practice, to confirm this early dedication. To give them a solemn opportunity of taking the vows of that covenant, of which,

in their infancy, they received the seal, it was customary, from a very early period, for those who had been baptized in infancy, to be brought, at a certain age, to the bishop or minister, to give an account of the faith, in which, by that time, they had been instructed, and on declaring their adherence to that faith, to be dismissed with his blessing. From this practice arose that ceremony, known in the church of England by the name of confirmation, in which baptized persons, being come to the years of discretion, renew the vow made in their name at their baptism, ratifying and confirming the same in their own persons, and acknowledging themselves bound to believe, and to do all those things which their godfathers and godmothers then undertook for them. After this they kneel in order before the bishop, who, laying his hand severally upon the head of every one of them, offers a short prayer. The church of England agrees with us in thinking that there is no warrant for considering confirmation, according to the doctrine of the church of Rome, as a sacrament; for there is no matter, the imposition of hands being only a gesture designing a particular person, and significant of good will; there are no words appointed by God to be used in performing this action; and there is no promise of a special blessing. The church of England differs from us in considering confirmation as not only authorized, but recommended by the actions of Peter and John. Being sent down by the body of the apostles to Samaria, they laid their hands upon those whom Philip had baptized in that city; after which action, accompanied with prayer, these persons received the Holy Ghost. It appears to us, that an action of the apostles, who had the power of conferring extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, does not form, without a particular command, a precedent for Christians in succeeding ages; and as the primitive salutary practice, which has been mentioned, was laid aside by some of the first reformers, upon account of the corruptions which it had been the occasion of introducing into the church of Rome, we do not feel ourselves bound to revive it. At the same time, Calvin expresses a wish that it were restored; and we are very far from condemning confirmation as practised in the church of England. Although we account it a ceremony merely of human institution, we think it such a ceremony as the rulers of every Christian society are entitled to appoint, according to their views of what may best promote the edification of those committed to their charge; and, as we have no such ceremony, we endeavour to supply the want of it, in the manner which appears to us effectual for the same purpose, and agreeable to the directions of Scripture. We think ourselves bound to exercise a continued inspection over the Christian education of those who have been baptized; that, as far as our authority or exertions can be of any avail, parents may not neglect to fulfil their vow. And when young persons partake, for the first time, of the Lord's supper, we are careful to impress upon their minds a sense of the solemnity of that action, and to lead them to consider themselves as then making that declaration of faith, and entering into those engagements, which would have accompanied their baptism had it been delayed to their riper years. We believe that, as they have enjoyed the advantages of infant baptism, and are thereby prepared for making "the answer of a good conscience towards God," all the inward

grace which that sacrament exhibits will be conveyed to their souls, when they partake worthily of the other : for then the covenant with God is upon their part confirmed ; and as certainly as they know that they fulfil what he requires of them, so certainly may they be assured that he will fulfil what he has promised.

Priestley. Barclay's Apology. Secker. Calvin.

CHAPTER VII.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THE other rite, to which Protestants give the name of a sacrament, is commonly called, after the example of Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 20, the Lord's supper, as the Lord's day is called, *Κυριακή ἡμετέρα*, Rev. i. 10. It derives its name from having been instituted by Jesus, after he had supped with his apostles, immediately before he went out to be delivered into the hands of his enemies.

In Egypt, for every house of the children of Israel, a lamb was slain upon that night, when the Almighty punished the cruelty and obstinacy of the Egyptians by killing their first-born; but charged the destroying angel to pass over the houses upon which the blood of the lamb was sprinkled. This was the original sacrifice of the passover. In commemoration of it, the Jews observed the annual festival of the passover, when all the males of Judea assembled before the Lord in Jerusalem. A lamb was slain for every house, the representative of that whose blood had been sprinkled in the night of the escape from Egypt. After the blood was poured under the altar by the priests, the lambs were carried home to be eaten by the people in their tents or houses at a domestic feast, where every master of a family took the cup of thanksgiving, and gave thanks with his family to the God of Israel. Jesus having fulfilled the law of Moses, to which in all things he submitted, by eating the paschal supper, with his disciples, proceeded after supper to institute a rite, which, to any person that reads the words of the institution without having formed a previous opinion upon the subject, will probably appear to have been intended by him as a memorial of that event, which was to happen not many hours after. Luke xxii. 19, 20. "He took bread and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it unto them, saying, this is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." He took the bread which was then on the table, and the wine, of which some had been used in sending round the cup of thanksgiving; and by saying, "This is my body, this is my blood, do this in remembrance of me," he declared to his apostles that this was the representation of his death, by which he wished them to commemorate that event. The apostle Paul, not having been present at the institution, received it by immediate revelation from the Lord Jesus; and the manner in which he delivers it to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. xi. 23—26, implies that it was not a rite confined to the apostles who were present when it was instituted, but that it was

meant to be observed by all Christians to the end of the world. "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." Whether we consider these words as part of the revelation made to Paul, or as his own commentary upon the nature of the ordinance which was revealed to him, they mark, with equal significancy and propriety, the extent and the perpetuity of the obligation to observe that rite which was first instituted in presence of the apostles.

There is a striking correspondence between this view of the Lord's supper, as a rite by which it was intended that all Christians should commemorate the death of Christ, and the circumstances attending the institution of the feast of the passover. Like the Jews, we have the original sacrifice; "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us," and by his substitution, our souls are delivered from death. Like the Jews, we have a feast in which that sacrifice, and the deliverance purchased by it, are remembered. Hence the Lord's supper was early called the eucharist, from its being said by Luke, λαβων αετον, ευχαριστησας εκλασε. Jesus when he took the bread gave thanks; and his disciples in all ages, when they receive the bread, keep a feast of thanksgiving. To Christians as to Jews, there "is a night to be much observed unto the Lord," in all generations. To Christians as to Jews, the manner of observing the night is appointed. To both, it is accompanied with thanksgiving. And thus, as different expressions led us formerly to conclude, that the initiatory rite of Christianity comes in place of the initiatory rite of the Abrahamic covenant, we now find that the other sacrament of the New Testament also has its counterpart under the Old.

The Lord's supper exhibits by a significant action, the characteristic doctrine of the Christian faith, that the death of its author, which seemed to be the completion of the rage of his enemies, was a voluntary sacrifice, so efficacious as to supersede the necessity of every other; and that his blood was shed for the remission of sins. By partaking of this rite, his disciples publish an event most interesting to all the kindreds of the earth; they declare that, far from being ashamed of the sufferings of their master, they glory in his cross; and while they thus perform the office implied in that expression of the apostle, τον θανατον του Κυριου καταγγελλετε, they at the same time cherish the sentiments, by which their religion ministers to their own consolation and improvement. They cannot remember the death of Christ, the circumstances which rendered that event necessary, the disinterested love, and the exalted virtues of their deliverer, without feeling their obligations to him. Unless the vilest hypocrisy accompany an action, which, by its very nature, professes to flow from warm affection, "the love of Christ" will "constrain" them to fulfil the purposes of his death, by "living unto him who died for them;" and we have every reason to hope that, in the places where he causes his name to be remembered, he will come and bless his people. From these views of the Lord's supper, the command of Jesus, "do this in remembrance of me," has been held in the highest respect ever since the night in which it was given; and the action has appeared so natural, so pleasing, so salutary an expression of all that a Christian feels, that, with the exception only of the Quakers, whose spiritual

system, far refined above the condition of humanity, despises all those helps which he who knows our weakness saw to be necessary, it has been observed in the Christian church, from the earliest times to the present day.

This is the pleasing picture of the Lord's supper, which we wish always to present : and happy had it been for the Christian world, if this were all that required to be said upon the subject. But it has so happened, that an ordinance, which is the natural expression of love to the common master of Christians, and which seems to constitute a bond of union amongst them, has proved the source of corruptions, the most dishonourable to their religion, and of mutual contentions the most bitter and the most disgraceful. For while, with a trifling exception, all Christians have agreed in respecting and observing this sacrament, they have been very far removed from one another in their opinions as to its nature ; and these opinions have not been always speculative, but have often had a considerable influence upon a great part of their practice.

Had the Scriptures represented the Lord's supper in no other light than as a remembrance of the death of Christ, there could hardly have been room for this variety of opinion. But as there are expressions, both in the words of the institution, and in other places of Scripture, which seem to open a further view of this ordinance, the different interpretations of these passages have given occasion to different systems. In the words of the institution, Jesus calls the cup "the new testament, or covenant, in my blood," which implies a connexion of some kind, in conceiving and stating which men may differ, between the cup drunk in the Lord's supper and the new covenant. He says also, "this is my body ; this is my blood ;" which implies a sacredness, of the degrees of which very different apprehensions may be entertained, arising from the connexion between the subject and the predicate of these propositions. The apostle Paul, in reciting the words of the institution in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, for the purpose of correcting certain indecencies in celebrating this ordinance which had arisen in the infant Church of Corinth, speaks of the guilt and danger of eating and drinking unworthily, in a manner which to some conveys an awful idea of the sanctity of the Lord's supper, and to many suggests the most precious benefits as the certain consequence of eating and drinking worthily. This suggestion appears to be confirmed by the incidental mention which Paul has made of the Lord's supper in the 10th chapter of that Epistle. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" Lastly, there is a long discourse of our Lord in John vi. which some consider as nothing more than a continued figure, without any special relation to the Lord's supper, whilst others apply it either in its literal, or at least in its highest sense to this ordinance. Upon these passages of Scripture are founded the four different systems concerning the Lord's supper, of which I mean to give a concise view.

1. The first to be mentioned, is that monstrous system which is held in the church of Rome, the several parts of which may be thus shortly brought together. It is conceived that the words, "this is my body, this is my blood," are to be understood in their most literal sense ; that when Jesus pronounced these words, he changed, by his

almighty power, the bread upon the table into his body, and the wine into his blood, and really delivered his body and blood into the hands of his apostles; and that at all times, when the Lord's supper is administered, the priest, by pronouncing these words with a good intention, has the power of making a similar change. This change is known by the name of transubstantiation; the propriety of which name is conceived to consist in this, that although the bread and wine are not changed in figure, taste, weight, or any other accident, it is believed that the substance of them is completely destroyed; that in place of it, the substance of the body and blood of Christ, although clothed with all the sensible properties of bread and wine, is truly present; and that the persons who receive what has been consecrated by pronouncing these words, do not receive bread and wine, but literally partake of the body and blood of Christ, and really eat his flesh and drink his blood. It is further conceived that the bread and wine, thus changed, are presented by the priest to God; and he receives the name of priest, because in laying them upon the altar he offers to God a sacrifice, which, although it be distinguished from all others, by being without the shedding of blood, is a true propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the dead and of the living—the body and blood of Christ, which were presented on the cross, again presented in the sacrifice of the mass. It is conceived, that the materials of this sacrifice, being truly the body and blood of Christ, possess an intrinsic virtue, which does not depend upon the disposition of him who receives them, but operates immediately upon all who do not obstruct the operation by a mortal sin. Hence it is accounted of great importance for the salvation of the sick and dying, that parts of these materials should be sent to them; and it is understood that the practice of partaking in private of a small portion of what the priest has thus transubstantiated, is, in all respects, as proper and salutary as joining with others in the Lord's Supper. It is further conceived, that as the bread and wine, when converted into the body and blood of Christ, are a natural object of reverence and adoration to Christians, it is highly proper to worship them upon the altar, and that it is expedient to carry them about in solemn procession, that they may receive the homage of all who meet them. What had been transubstantiated was therefore lifted up for the purpose of receiving adoration, both when it was shown to the people at the altar, and when it was carried about. Hence arose that expression in the church of Rome, the elevation of the host; *elevatio hostiæ*. But, as the wine in being carried about was exposed to accidents inconsistent with the veneration due to the body and blood of Christ, it became customary to send only the bread; and, in order to satisfy those who for this reason did not receive the wine, they were taught that, as the bread was changed into the body of Christ, they partook by concomitancy of the blood with the body. In process of time, the people were not allowed to partake of the cup; and it was said, that when Jesus spake these words, “drink ye all of it,” he was addressing himself only to his apostles, so that his command was fulfilled when the priests, the successors of the apostles, drank of the cup, although the people were excluded. And thus the last part of this system conspired with the first in exalting the clergy very far above

the laity. For the same persons, who had the power of changing bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, and who presented what they had thus made, as a sacrifice for the sins of others, enjoyed the privilege of partaking of the cup, while communion in one kind only was permitted to the people.

The absurdities of this system have been fully exposed by Calvin, Tillotson, Burnet, and the numberless writers, who, since the time of the Reformation, have directed the artillery of reason, philosophy, ridicule, and Scripture, against this enormous fabric. So much sound sense and logical acuteness have been displayed in the attack, that it may often be matter of wonder how such a system could be swallowed. To account for this, you must recollect the universal ignorance which for many ages overspread Europe, the natural progress of error, the credulity of superstition, the artifice with which this system was gradually unfolded, and the deep and continued policy which, by availing itself of figurative expressions in Scripture, of the glowing language of devout writers, of the superstition of the people, and of every favourable occurrence, compounded the whole into such a form, as, when brought to maturity, engaged various interests in maintaining its credit. It appears, from ecclesiastical history, that it was not without much opposition that this system, the result of the growing corruptions of succeeding ages, was finally established. Although, from the beginning, the Lord's supper was regarded with such reverence as would easily degenerate into superstition, and, although in all ages of the church there had been an opinion founded upon the words of our Lord, that communicants partake of his body and blood, yet when an attempt was made in the ninth century to define the manner of this participation, by saying that the body which suffered on the cross was locally present in the Lord's supper, the attempt was resisted; and the rational doctrine, by which Joannes Scotus Erigena combated this attempt, was maintained and illustrated in the eleventh century by Berenger. Even after the name transubstantiation was invented in the thirteenth century, and declared by the authority of the Pope in the fourth Lateran council to be an article of faith, impressions made by the doctrine of Berenger were not effaced from the minds of men: and some, who did not venture to profess their disbelief of an article which the supreme authority of the church had imposed upon all Christians, tried to avoid the palpable absurdities of that article, by substituting, about the end of the thirteenth century, in place of transubstantiation, the word consubstantiation. This word was adopted by Luther at the beginning of the Reformation, and is commonly employed to express the distinguishing character of the second system concerning the Lord's supper.

2. It appeared to Luther, from the words of the institution, and from other places of Scripture, that the body and blood of Christ are really present in the Lord's supper. But he saw the absurdity of supposing that, in contradiction to our senses, what appears to us to be as much bread and wine, after the consecration as before it, is literally destroyed, or changed into another substance; and, therefore, he taught that the bread and wine indeed remain, but that, together with them, there is present the substance of the body and blood of

Christ, which is literally received by communicants. As in a red-hot iron, he said, two distinct substances, iron and fire, are united, so is the body of Christ joined with the bread. Some of the immediate followers of Luther, perceiving that similes of this kind, which certainly contain no argument, did not throw any light upon the subject to which they were applied, contented themselves with saying, that the body and blood of Christ are really present in the sacrament, although the manner of that presence is a mystery which we cannot explain. Other followers of Luther, wishing to give a more accurate account of this article of their faith, had recourse to the *αντιδοσις ιδιωµατων*, the communication of properties, which was mentioned formerly, as resulting from the union between the divine and human natures of Christ.* They said that all those properties of the divine nature, the exercise of which is essential to the office of mediator, were communicated to the human nature. It appeared to them, therefore, that as the mediator of the new covenant can only act where he is, and as the human nature of Christ enters into our conception of his being mediator, there is communicated to that nature what they called *omnipresentia majestatica*, by which the body of Christ, although a true body, might be in all places at the same time. Having thus satisfied themselves of the possibility of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's supper, they found it easy to believe, that when these words, "this is my body, this is my blood," were pronounced, the body and blood of Christ, being really present, united themselves to the bread and wine, and that both were at once received by the people.

The great proportion of Christians, who hold what I called the Catholic opinion concerning the person of our Saviour, understand the *αντιδοσις ιδιωµατων* in a different sense. They consider, that in consequence of the intimate union between the two natures of him who is both God and man, every thing that is true concerning the human nature may be affirmed of the same person, of whom every thing true concerning the divine nature may also be affirmed. So it may be said that the Son of God died, because he died in respect of his human nature; or that "the Son of man hath power to forgive sins," because the Son of man is also the Son of God. But considering each nature as true and complete by itself, they account it as impossible that any of the properties of the divine nature should belong to the human, as that any of the weaknesses of humanity should be imparted to the divinity of Christ. Other Christians, therefore, who believe in the divinity of our Saviour, while they admit that, in respect of his divine nature, he is always present with his disciples, believe also that his body, which was upon earth during his abode here, and which was removed from earth at the time of his ascension, is now confined to that place which it inhabits in heaven; and they consider ubiquity as a property inconsistent with the nature of body. The ubiquity of the body of Christ, which other Christians upon this ground reject, was not held either by Luther himself, or by all his followers, but was invented by some of them as a philosophical explication of that tenet, concerning the real presence of the body

* Book iii. ch. 8.

and blood of Christ in the Lord's supper, which they derived from him.

It is not easy to form a precise notion of the manner in which this tenet is explained, or defended by the modern Lutherans, who appear to feel the force of all the objections that have been urged against it. They disclaim the various errors and absurdities, which appear to us to be connected with ascribing to a true body a local presence at all times, in all places; and they employ a multitude of words, which I profess I do not understand, to reconcile the limited extension which enters into our conceptions of body with that omnipresence of the body of Christ, which appears to them to flow from the inseparable union between the divine and human natures. They reject the term consubstantiation, because that may seem to imply that the body of Christ is incorporated with the substance of the bread and wine. They reject another term also, which had been used upon this subject, impanation, because that may seem to imply that the body of Christ is enclosed, and lodged in the bread. But still they profess to hold that doctrine, which is expressed in all the standard books of the Lutheran churches, and is one of the principal marks of distinction between them and the reformed churches; that, besides the earthly matter, which is the object of our senses in the sacrament, there are also present *αδιασταντως*, in such a manner as not to be removed at any distance from it, the real body and blood of Christ; so that by all who partake of the Lord's supper *cum pane corpus Christi ore accipiat et manducetur; cum vino autem sanguis ejus bibatur*.

This opinion, although free from some of the absurdities of transubstantiation, appears to us to labour under so many palpable difficulties, that we are disposed to wonder at its being held by men of a philosophical mind. It is fair, however, to mention, that the doctrine of the real presence is in the Lutheran church merely a speculative opinion, having no influence upon the practice of those by whom it is adopted. It appears to them that this opinion furnishes the best method of explaining a Scripture expression: but they do not consider the presence of the body and blood of Christ with the bread and wine, as imparting to the sacrament any physical virtue, by which the benefit derived from it is independent of the disposition of him by whom it is received; or as giving it the nature of a sacrifice: or as rendering the bread and wine an object of adoration to Christians. And their doctrine being thus separated from the three great practical errors of the church of Rome, receives, even from those who account it false and irrational, a kind of indulgence very different from that which is shown to the doctrine of transubstantiation.

3. A system free from all the objections which adhere to that of Luther, was held by some of his first associates in the Reformation, and constitutes the third system concerning the Lord's supper which I have to delineate.

Carlostadt, a professor with Luther in the university of Wittenberg, and Zuinglius, a native of Switzerland, the founder of the reformed churches, or those Protestant churches which are not Lutheran, taught that the bread and wine in the Lord's supper are the signs of the absent body and blood of Christ: that when Jesus said

"this is my body, this is my blood," he used a figure exactly of the same kind with that, by which, according to the abbreviations continually practised in ordinary speech, the sign is often put for the thing signified. As this figure is common, so there were two circumstances which would prevent the apostles from misunderstanding it, when used in the institution of the Lord's supper. The one was, that they saw the body of Jesus then alive, and therefore could not suppose that they were eating it. The other was, that they had just been partaking of a Jewish festival, in the institution of which the very same figure had been used. For in the night in which the children of Israel escaped out of Egypt, God said of the lamb which he commanded every house to eat and slay, "it is the Lord's passover;" not meaning that it was the action of the Lord passing over every house, but the token and pledge of that action. It is admitted by all Christians, that there is such a figure used in one part of the institution. When our Lord says, "this cup is the new covenant in my blood," none suppose him to mean that the cup is the covenant, but all believe that he means to call it the memorial, or the sign, or the seal of the covenant. If it be understood, that, agreeably to the analogy of language, he uses a similar figure when he says, "This is my body," and that he means nothing more than "this is the sign of my body," we are delivered from all the absurdities implied in the literal interpretation, to which the Roman Catholics think it necessary to adhere. We give the words a more natural interpretation than the Lutherans do, who consider "this is my body" as intended to express a proposition which is totally different, "my body is with this;" and we escape from the difficulties in which they are involved by their forced interpretation.

Further, by this method of interpretation there is no ground left for that adoration, which the church of Rome pays to the bread and wine; for they are only the signs of that which is believed to be absent. There is no ground for accounting the Lord's supper, to the dishonour of "the high priest of our profession," a new sacrifice presented by an earthly priest; for the bread and wine are only the memorials of that sacrifice which was once offered on the cross. And, lastly, this interpretation destroys the popish idea of a physical virtue in the Lord's supper; for if the bread and wine are signs of what is absent, their use must be to excite the remembrance of it; but this is a use which cannot possibly exist with regard to any, but those whose minds are thereby put into a proper frame; and therefore the Lord's supper becomes, instead of a charm, a mental exercise, and the efficacy of it arises not *ex opere operato*, but *ex opere operantis*.

An interpretation recommended by such important advantages found a favourable reception with many, whose minds were opened at the Reformation to the light of philosophy and Scripture. Its leading principles are held by all the reformed churches, as one mark by which they are distinguished from the Lutheran; and it was adopted as a full account of the Lord's supper, by that large body of Protestants who are known by the name of Socinians, because it coincides entirely with their ideas of a sacrament. It has been illustrated very

fully in two treatises ; the one written in the beginning of last century by Bishop Hoadley, entitled, *A Plain Account of the Nature and Ends of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* ; the other written about twenty years ago, by Dr. Bell, entitled, *An Attempt to ascertain the Authority, Nature, and Design of the Lord's Supper*. The leading principle of the two treatises is the same, and may be thus shortly stated in the words of Dr. Bell. "That the Lord's supper is nothing more than what the words of the institution fully express, a religious commemoration of the death of Christ ; which it is the absolute duty of every one who believes in Christ to celebrate ; that the performance of it is not attended with any other benefits than those we ourselves take care to make it productive of, by its religious influence on our principles and practice ; but that, of all mere acts of religious worship, it is naturally in itself adapted to possess our minds most strongly with religious reflections, and to induce as well as enable us to strengthen most effectually every virtuous resolution."

Bishop Hoadley and Dr. Bell avail themselves of the rational interpretation which Zuinglius gave of these words, "this is my body ;" and of the plain meaning of the other words of the institution, "do this in remembrance of me." They consider the discourse of our Lord in John vi. as having no relation to the Lord's supper. They interpret *κοινωνια του αιματος, κοινωνια του σωματος του Χριστου*, 1 Cor. x. 16. which we render "the communion of the blood, the communion of the body of Christ," as meaning nothing more than the participation of his body and blood, *i. e.* of the signs of his body and blood. According to them, the apostle refers in that chapter merely to the public profession of Christianity, which all who partake of the Lord's supper solemnly and jointly make ; and the unworthy communicating, which is condemned in 1 Cor. xi. is confined to those who make no distinction between the bread and wine, which they receive at the Lord's supper, as signs of the body and blood of Christ, and the bread and wine which they receive at any other time.

This third system is not necessarily connected with the two distinguishing tenets of the Socinians. For those who hold the Catholic opinion with regard to the person of Christ and the atonement, may consider the Lord's supper as of no other advantage to the individual, than by leading him to remember that event, the devout recollection of which has a tendency to minister to his improvement. But it so happens, that all those who are called Calvinists have adopted a further view of the Lord's supper ; and, as the thirty-nine articles of the church of England were composed by Calvinists, that view is expressed as strongly in the articles which treat of the Lord's supper, and in the office for the communion, as in our Confession of Faith and catechism.

4. This farther view, which forms a fourth system concerning the Lord's supper, originated in the language of Calvin upon this subject. He knew that former attempts to reconcile the systems of Luther and Zuinglius had proved fruitless. But he saw the importance of uniting Protestants upon a point, with respect to which they agreed in condemning the errors of the church of Rome ; and his zeal in renewing the attempt was probably quickened by the sincere

friendship which he entertained for Melancthon, who was the successor of Luther, while he himself had succeeded Zuinglius in conducting the Reformation in Switzerland. He thought that the system of Zuinglius did not come up to the force of the expressions used in Scripture ; and, although he did not approve of the manner in which the Lutherans explain these expressions, it appeared to him that there was a sense in which the full significancy of them might be preserved, and a great part of the Lutheran language might continue to be used. As he agreed with Zuinglius, in thinking that the bread and wine were the signs of the body and blood of Christ, which were not locally present, he renounced both transubstantiation and consubstantiation. He agreed farther with Zuinglius, in thinking that the use of these signs, being a memorial of the sacrifice once offered on the cross, was intended to produce a moral effect. But he taught, that to all who remember the death of Christ in a proper manner, Christ, by the use of these signs, is spiritually present,—present to their minds ; and he considered this spiritual presence as giving a significancy, that goes far beyond the Socinian sense, to these words of Paul ; “ the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ ; the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ ? ” It is not the blessing pronounced which makes any change upon the cup, but to all who join with becoming affection in the thanksgiving then uttered in the name of the congregation, Christ is spiritually present, so that they may emphatically be said to partake, *κοινωνεῖν, μετέχειν*, of his body and blood ; because his body and blood being spiritually present convey the same nourishment to their souls, the same quickening to the spiritual life, as bread and wine do to the natural life. Hence Calvin was led to connect the discourse in John vi. with the Lord's supper ; not in that literal sense which is agreeable to Popish and Lutheran ideas, as if the body of Christ was really eaten, and his blood really drunk by any ; but in a sense agreeable to the expression of our Lord in the conclusion of that discourse, “ the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life ; ” *i. e.* when I say to you, “ whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him ; he shall live by me, for my flesh is meat indeed,” you are to understand these words, not in a literal but in a spiritual sense. The spiritual sense adopted by the Socinians is barely this, that the doctrine of Christ is the food of the soul, by cherishing a life of virtue here, and the hope of a glorious life hereafter. The Calvinists think, that into the full meaning of the figure used in these words, there enter not merely the exhortations and instructions which a belief of the gospel affords, but also that union between Christ and his people, which is the consequence of faith, and that communication of grace and strength, by which they are quickened in well-doing, and prepared for the discharge of every duty.

According to this fourth system, the full benefit of the Lord's supper is peculiar to those who partake worthily. For while all who eat the bread and drink the wine may be said to show the Lord's death, and may also receive some devout impressions, they only to whom Jesus is spiritually present share in that spiritual nourishment which arises from partaking of his body and blood. According to

this system, eating and drinking unworthily has a further sense than enters into the Socinian system, and it becomes the duty of every Christian to examine himself, not only with regard to his knowledge, but also with regard to his general conduct, before he eats of that bread and drinks of that cup. It becomes also the duty of those who have the inspection of Christian societies, to exclude from this ordinance persons, of whom there is every reason to believe that they are strangers to the sentiments which it presupposes, and without which none are prepared for holding that communion with Jesus which it implies.

This fourth system may, with proper judgment and discretion, be rendered in a high degree subservient to the moral improvement of Christians; but there is much danger of its being abused. The notion of a communion with Christ in this particular ordinance, more intimate than at any other time, may foster a spirit of fanaticism, unless the nature and the fruits of that communion are carefully explained. The humble and contrite may be overwhelmed with religious melancholy, when the state of their minds does not correspond to the descriptions which are sometimes given of that communion. Presumptuous sinners may be confirmed in the practice of wickedness by feeling an occasional glow of affection; or, on the other hand, a general neglect of an ordinance, which all are commanded to observe, may be, and in some parts of Scotland is, the consequence of holding forth notions of the danger and guilt of communicating unworthily, more rigorous than are clearly warranted by Scripture.*

I have now delineated the four capital systems of opinion, to which the few passages in Scripture that mention the Lord's supper have given occasion. I leave to your private study a critical examination of the several passages, and a particular discussion of the various arguments, by which each system has been supported. In prosecuting this study, you will find that the passage in 1 Cor. x. has suggested the idea of a feast after a sacrifice, as the true explication of the Lord's supper. The idea was first illustrated by Cudworth, in a particular dissertation, printed at the end of that edition of his *Intellectual System*, which the learned Mosheim, a Lutheran divine, published in Latin, and has enriched with the most valuable notes. The idea was adopted by the ingenious Warburton, and applied by him, in one of his sermons, in a treatise on the Lord's supper, and in a supplemental volume of the *Divine Legation of Moses*, as an effectual answer to both the Popish and the Socinian systems. When you examine what Cudworth, Mosheim, Warburton, Hoadley, and Bell have written, you will probably think that this idea, like many others which learned and ingenious men lay hold of, has been pushed too far; that, although there are points of resemblance between the Lord's supper, and those feasts which, both amongst heathens and Jews, followed after sacrifices, yet the resemblance is too vague, and fails in too many respects to furnish the ground, either of a clear exposition of the nature of the ordinance, or of any solid argument in opposition to those who have mistaken its nature.

* Hill's Theological Institutes, Part. iii. 2.

In the fourth system the church of England and we perfectly agree, as may be seen by comparing Articles xxviii. and xxix. with our standards. With regard to the differences between us, as to the times, the places, and the manner of receiving the Lord's supper, they are too insignificant, I do not say to be discussed, but to be mentioned here; "for the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." One circumstance only may appear to be important. The nature of the ordinance, as well as the words of Paul, "As often as ye eat this bread," implies this difference between the two sacraments, that while baptism is not to be repeated, the Lord's supper is to be received frequently. But as the spiritual religion of Jesus has, in no instance, given a precise directory for the outward conduct, the frequency of celebrating it is left to be regulated by the prudence of Christian societies. The early Christians were accustomed to partake of the Lord's supper, every time that they assembled for public worship. It is certainly fit that Christians should not assemble for that purpose, without remembering the great event which is characteristical of their religion. But as that event may be brought to their remembrance by prayer, by reading the Scriptures, by the discourses delivered when they assemble, and by the sacrament of baptism, it does not appear essential, that the particular and solemn method of showing the Lord's death, which he has appointed, should form a part of their stated worship. In latter times, the Lord's supper is celebrated by some churches, at the return of stated festivals throughout the year; by others, without any fixed time, according to circumstances, either oftener in the year, or, in imitation of the Jewish passover, only once. There are advantages attending all the modes, which it is difficult precisely to estimate; for if the impressions connected with this ordinance are oftener excited in one mode, it may be expected that they will be deeper and more lasting in another. Very worthy people have differed as to the obligation of communicating frequently, and consequently as to the distance of time at which such opportunities should be afforded to large societies of Christians. But at whatever time the Lord's supper is administered, all who hold the fourth system agree in thinking themselves warranted, by these words of our Lord, "this cup is the new covenant in my blood," to represent this ordinance as the appointed method, in which Christians renew their covenant with God. For while they engage, at a time when every sentiment of piety and gratitude may be supposed to be strong and warm in their breasts, that they will fulfil their part of their covenant, they behold in the actions which they perform a striking representation of that event, by which the covenant was confirmed; and they receive, in the grace and strength then conveyed to their souls, a seal of that forgiveness of sins, which, through the blood of the covenant, is granted to all that repent, and a pledge of the future blessings promised to those who are "faithful unto death."

CHAPTER VIII.

CONDITION OF MEN AFTER DEATH.

THE concluding topic of the ordinary system of theology is entitled *De novissimis*, i. e. *De resurrectione, extremo judicio, eternâ morte, eternâ vitâ*. It comprehends various questions respecting the condition of men after death. It might appear strange if I were to omit the mention of this topic : and yet I do not think any particular discussion of it necessary in this place. For all the questions generally arranged under this topic are included in former parts of the course, or turn upon principles that belong to other sciences, or are of such a nature as not to admit of any solution. The great doctrine which theology clearly teaches, with regard to the future condition of men, is this, that by the righteousness of Jesus Christ there is conveyed, to all who repent and believe, a right to eternal life.* This is the only point which it is of importance for us distinctly to understand : for if God is to give eternal life to his servants through Jesus Christ, there can be no doubt that it will be a happy life, although the present state of our faculties may not admit of our forming an adequate conception of the nature of its felicity. The various images, which are used in Scripture, may indeed be employed with great propriety by persons of correct taste, and of a sober and chastised judgment, in filling up such a picture of a future state, as may minister to the consolation and improvement of Christians. But this is rather a subject of popular discourse than of theological discussion ; because the data are not sufficient to establish, beyond doubt, any one position concerning the particulars that constitute the happiness of a future state, as the only position that can be seriously maintained by those who receive the Scripture accounts.

Besides questions concerning the nature of the happiness of heaven, there have also arisen questions concerning the state of the soul, in the interval between death and the general resurrection. But these questions belong to pneumatology. For if we believe, with Dr. Priestley, that the soul is not a substance distinct from the body, we must believe with him that the whole of the human machine is at rest after death, till it be restored to its functions at the last day ; but if we are convinced of the immateriality of the soul, we shall not think the soul so entirely dependent in all its operations upon its present companion, but that it may exist and act in an unembodied state. And if once we are satisfied that a state of separate existence is possible, we shall

* Book iv. ch. 4.

easily attach credit to the interpretation commonly given of the various expressions in Scripture, which seem to intimate that the souls of good men are admitted to the presence of God immediately after death, although we soon find that a bound is set to our speculations, concerning the nature of this intermediate state. The subject is handled by Burnet, *De Statu Mortuorum et Resurgentium*; and it has of late been rendered an object of attention by the bold speculations of Dr. Priestley, and by an opinion which Law has expressed very fully in the Appendix to Considerations on the Theory of Religion, and which many English divines have not scrupled to avow: that immortality was not the condition of man's nature, but an additional privilege conferred through Jesus Christ, and that the Christian revelation of an immortality lays the chief, if not the whole, stress upon a resurrection.

One branch of the opinions that have been held concerning an intermediate state is the popish doctrine of purgatory, a doctrine which appears, upon the slightest inspection of the texts that have been adduced in support of it, to derive no evidence from Scripture; which originated in the error of the church of Rome in assigning to personal suffering a place in the justification of a sinner; and which is completely overturned by the doctrine of justification by faith, and by the general strain of Scripture, which represents this life as a state of probation upon our conduct during which our everlasting condition depends.

The certainty of a general resurrection is included in that right to eternal life, which enters into the nature of the Gospel remedy. But it has been asked, with regard to the resurrection, whether the same bodies rise. In giving the answer, we are obliged to resort to the principles of physiology, and soon find ourselves entangled in a dispute about words, upon this abstruse and undefinable question in metaphysics; what is the principle of identity in a substance undergoing such perpetual changes as the human body? A question has also been agitated, with regard to the eternity of hell torments. That view of the benevolence of the divine administration, and of the final efficacy of that benevolence, which seems to be implied in the opinion that hell torments are not eternal, naturally creates a prejudice in favour of it. But in speaking of the extent of the Gospel remedy, I stated the extreme caution with which we ought to speculate upon subjects so infinitely removed beyond the sphere of our observation; and the only thing which I have now to add is, that the Scriptures, by applying the very same expression to the happiness of the righteous, and the punishment of the wicked, seem to teach us that both are of equal duration.

Burnet.—Priestley.—Law.—Horsley.—Confession of Faith.—Marckii Medulla.—Calvin's Institutes. Secker's Lectures on the Catechism, and Five Sermons against Popery.

BOOK VI.

OPINIONS CONCERNING CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

CHAPTER I.

FOUNDATION OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

THE followers of Jesus are united by the mutual consideration, the tenderness in bearing with the infirmities of others, the solicitude to avoid giving offence, the care to make their light to shine before men, so as to draw them to the practice of virtue, and the brotherly zeal in admonishing them of their duty, and in reproving their faults, which flow from the native spirit of the gospel, which form the subject of many particular precepts, and by means of which Christians are said to “edify one another.”

But their union is produced and cemented, not only by those affections which their religion cherishes, but also by their joint acknowledgment of that system of truth which it reveals. “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.”* As the public worship of the “one God and Father of all,” who is known by the light of nature, forms one of the duties of natural religion, so Christians, who by bearing that name, profess to believe in the person, whose interposition has opened a scheme for the salvation of sinners, are required to “confess him before men,” and by attending certain ordinances, to give a public testimony that they entertain the sentiments which are supposed common to all his disciples. The avowal of their belief of that system of truth, which may be learned from the revelation received by them as divine, is not left optional to Christians. He whom they acknowledge as their Master, has judged it proper to appoint that they shall solemnly be admitted amongst the number of his disciples by baptism, that they

* Eph. iv. 4, 5, 6.

shall statedly join in different acts of worship presented to the Father in his name, and that they shall declare the reverence and gratitude with which they receive the characteristical doctrine of his religion, the redemption of the world through his blood, by partaking frequently of the Lord's supper.

If the whole Christian world could assemble together for the purpose of observing the institutions of Christ, they would form one visible society, distinguished from the rest of mankind, and united amongst themselves, by employing the same external rites as expressions of their holding the same truth. It was not the intention of the author of the gospel that this visible unity of the Christian society should be long preserved, because his religion was to spread rapidly throughout the world. But although, from the earliest times, different assemblies of Christians have, of necessity, met in separate places, yet the very act of their meeting, proceeding from the same general principles, and being directed to the same purpose, is such an expression of union, as their distance from one another admits; and all the assemblies of Christians in every quarter of the globe, professing to hold "the truth as it is in Jesus," and to worship God according to the appointment of Christ, are to be regarded as branches of what has been significantly called the catholic or universal church, the great society of the followers of the Lord Jesus, who would meet together if they could.

Separation of place, which the propagation of Christianity renders unavoidable, has conspired with other causes to produce an apparent breach of the unity of the catholic church. Different interpretations of Scripture have led to an opposition amongst Christians, in respect to the great doctrines of the gospel; different opinions as to the mode of worship, and the manner of observing the rites of religion have been accompanied by corresponding differences in practice; and some who call themselves disciples of Christ have departed so far from the sentiments generally entertained by their brethren, as to judge all rites unnecessary.

If the followers of Jesus form a distinct society, and are bound to profess their faith by the observance of certain institutions, there will probably be found in the gospel some regulations as to the time and manner of observing them, some appointment of persons to administer them, some principles of order, and some provision of authority for guarding the honour and purity of the Christian association. All this flows by natural consequence from the general idea of an obligation upon Christians to assemble together, for the purpose of professing their faith by the observance of certain rites. But if there is no such obligation, if religion is merely a personal concern, and all the intercourse of a Christian with his Saviour and his God may be carried on in secret, then the whole idea of church-government vanishes, and the followers of Christ, as such, have no other bond of connexion except brotherly love.

The first point, therefore, to which our attention must be turned, is an inquiry into the opinion of those who deny the perpetual obligation of the rites observed by other Christians, that we may thus ascertain whether we are warranted by Scripture to lay the foundation of church-government, in its being the duty of Christians to

assemble together for the observance of those rites. This inquiry is a branch of the first general head, under which I arrange the questions that have been agitated concerning church-government. They respect either the persons in whom church-government is vested, or the extent of power which the lawful exercise of church-government implies.

King on the Creed.

Neale's History of the Puritans.

Madox against Neale.

Potter on Church-Government.

Rogers's Visible and Invisible Church.

Rogers's Civil Establishment of Religion.

Benson.

Anderson against Rhynd.

Stillingfleet's Irenicum.

Cyprianus Isotimus, by Jamieson.

Calvin's Institutes.

Burn's Ecclesiastical Law.

Atterbury.

Bennet on Convocations.

Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity.

Divine Right of Church Government, by London Ministers.

King on the Primitive Church.

Grey's Abridgment of Gibson.

Warburton.

Wake.

Sherlock on Jude, 3d verse.

CHAPTER II.

OPINIONS CONCERNING THE PERSONS IN WHOM CHURCH GOVERNMENT IS VESTED.

THE different opinions respecting the persons in whom church government is vested will be brought under review, by attending to the systems of the Quakers, the Independents, the church of Rome, the Episcopalians, and the Presbyterians.

SECTION I.

QUAKERS.

THE dangerous and delusive spirit, known by the name of fanaticism, was the principle of many sects which appeared after the Reformation, particularly of some of the rigid separatists from the church of England in the seventeenth century. It continues to tincture, more or less, the religious system of many individuals, and of different bodies of men : but the Quakers are the sect best known in our times, who profess what we call fanaticism as their peculiar tenet, and who follow it out in all its consequences. It is the character of fanaticism to consider the revelation of the words and actions of Christ contained in the Scriptures, and all the ordinances and outward performances there prescribed, as of very inferior value, when compared with the immediate influence exerted by the Spirit upon the mind of the individual. It is conceived that this inward light constitutes a man a Christian, even although he has not the knowledge of the truth ; that he is to feel the impulse of the Spirit in all the important actions of his life, but more especially in the worship of God : and that, walking continually by this perfect guidance, he would be degraded if he were obliged to perform any external action in a certain manner.

This principle easily extends its influence, both to the positive rites of Christianity, and to all the circumstances that attend public worship. The Quakers consider baptism and the Lord's supper, which other Christians think themselves obliged to observe, merely as symbolical actions, the one shadowing forth the inward purification of the soul : the other, the intimate communion which Christians enjoy with Christ : as figures for the time then present, which our Lord, in accommodation to the weakness of those with whom he lived, conde-

scended to use before the age of the Spirit commenced ; but as become unnecessary to all who understand the genius and the life of Christianity, since the outpouring of the Holy Ghost upon the day of Pentecost. In like manner, fixed times for the worship of God, stated prayer, and exhortations given by certain persons at certain seasons, are considered as intrusions upon the office of the Spirit, and are condemned as implying a distrust of his operations. It is allowed that Christians ought to assemble in the expectation of being moved by the Spirit, and that the act of assembling may prepare their minds for receiving his influence. But it is understood, that in their assemblies every one ought to speak as he is moved by the Spirit ; that the office of prayer and exhortation is the gift of the Spirit ; that the office continues during his operation ; that it comes to an end when the impulse is exhausted ; and that any person who prays and exhorts without this impulse acts presumptuously, because he acts without warrant. From these principles it follows that an order of men invested with the character, and exercising what we account the office of the ministry, is not only unnecessary, but also unlawful. It is obvious too that these principles are incompatible with a regular association. For although Christians who hold these principles may agree as to the time and place of meeting, yet as often as the inward monitor speaks to any of them, that individual is set above the control of his brethren, and amongst any number of individuals following out these principles to their full extent, there cannot be that subordination, without which it is impossible for a society to subsist.

When the Quakers first appeared in the seventeenth century, they avowed, without disguise, the principles which have now been stated. They declaimed with violence against the office of the ministry as sinful ; and in that fervour of spirit which was cherished, partly by the novelty of their doctrine, and partly by the troubled state of the times, they committed various outrages against those assemblies of Christians, who performed the stated services of religion under the direction of fixed pastors. The experience of that punishment, which must always be inflicted upon those who disturb the tranquillity of others, soon taught the Quakers great circumspection of conduct ; and the abilities of some men of learning and of extensive views, who early embraced this persuasion, gave their religious system a more plausible form, than it seemed at first capable of admitting. Barclay's *Apology*, published in Latin, in 1675, is a well-digested exposition of fifteen theses, which contain what he calls the true Christian theology. It is properly termed an apology ; for, while it throws into the shade the most obnoxious tenets of the Quakers, it presents all that it does publish in the most favourable light, and with much art and ingenuity it attempts to give a rational vindication of a system, which disclaims the use of reason. Barclay's *Apology* is the ostensible creed of the Quakers : and, in the spirit which dictated that book, they have, for more than a century, been accommodating their principles to the spirit of the times. While they have insured the protection of government, and obtained the most indulgent condescension to all their scruples, by uniformly distinguishing themselves as orderly and peaceable citizens, they have adopted many internal regulations which are fitted to preserve their

existence as a peculiar sect. There are, in every particular meeting, two or three of the gravest and most respectable men, who, under the name of elders, are invested with a degree of authority, whose character claims a kind of subjection from the brethren, who occasionally admonish or reprove, and who even address a word of exhortation to those meetings, in which none of the brethren finds himself moved to speak. There are monthly meetings of the congregations in a particular district, and quarterly meetings of a larger district; and there is an annual meeting in London at Whitsuntide, to which representatives are sent from all parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland, which receives appeals from the inferior meetings, and which issues an epistle addressed to the brethren in all the three kingdoms, and containing general advice, or such particular directions as circumstances may seem to require. Here then is a great political association; here are office-bearers, a subordination of courts, and a supreme executive authority; and although the power, both of the office-bearers and of the courts, is avowedly very limited, yet it proceeds so far as to deny, *i. e.* to exclude from the society, disorderly walkers,—those who are either contumacious, or whose conduct, in the transactions of civil life, is such as to bring disgrace upon the society; so that, in effect, it is all the power which any society purely ecclesiastical has a title to exercise.

But although a regard to their own safety, and the ascendant acquired at different times by the wealth, the talents, or the virtues of leading men of the persuasion, have formed the Quakers into a great political association, it is manifest that their religious principles have no tendency to keep them united. To Christians who consider a standing ministry as useless and unlawful, and who understand that every man is to be guided in the worship of God purely by the impulses which he feels, there can be no such thing as church government properly so called; and the regulations now stated have been adopted as a counterbalance to the disunion and disorder, which are the natural consequences of this defect.

That we may not then regard the description of persons invested with church government, concerning which the Christian world has entertained various opinions, and all the powers which these persons claim, as merely a human invention, it is of importance, before we proceed further in this discussion, to satisfy ourselves that that annihilation of church government, which results from the tenets of the Quakers, is not countenanced by Scripture.

The principles of fanaticism are repugnant not only to the system of those, who consider the natural powers of man as sufficient for the discharge of his duty, but also to the system of those, who believe that the operation of the Spirit is essentially necessary for the conversion and the final salvation of a sinner. The great body of Christians, who hold that system, conceive that the operation of the Spirit is conveyed to the soul by the use of means. They consider the Scriptures as a complete unchangeable rule of faith and practice, and the ordinances of religion as perpetual institutions to be observed by all Christians, according to the directions of their master; and, far from thinking that these means are superseded by the grace given to

any individual, they understand that this grace only enables him, in the diligent use of the Scriptures, and of the positive rites of religion, to attain the "end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul."

This opinion, with regard to the manner of the operation of the Spirit, appears from the statement of it, to be sound and rational and agreeable to the constitution of man. It implies that there is an orderly method of administering the rites of Christianity; and as the method cannot continue orderly unless there are certain persons to whom this office is committed, the existence of such a description of persons is a consequence which seems fairly to result from the opinion. When we proceed to try our conclusions upon this subject by their conformity with Scripture, the consequence now mentioned, as well as the opinion from which we deduced it, is found to receive every kind of confirmation.

Those whom the Scriptures suppose to be led by the Spirit are there addressed as in the full possession of reason, and in the habitual use of certain means. Our Lord, by choosing apostles, and sending them forth to make disciples of all nations, intimated that he was to employ in the conversion of the world, not merely an immediate illapse of the Spirit, but also the ministration of men holding and exercising an office. Of the three thousand, who were added to the church immediately after the extraordinary effusion of the gifts of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, it is said, Acts ii. 42, *ἦσαν προσκαρτεροῦντες τῇ διδασκῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων*, i. e. *they continued to listen to the teaching of the apostles*. Paul gives Titus a charge to ordain elders in every city;* the office-bearers of different churches are occasionally mentioned; and a considerable part of the first epistle to the Corinthians is intended to apply a remedy to the disorders, which the abundance of spiritual gifts had occasioned in that church. For this purpose the apostle declares that all those gifts were distributed for the edification of the church; and he delivers this general rule, 1 Cor. xiv. 32, 33: "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints:" a rule which, when taken in conjunction with the occasion upon which it was delivered, and the reason upon which it is grounded, seems intended to furnish a perpetual preservative against that very confusion, which the Quakers experienced as soon as they presumed to disregard it, by exalting the exercise of the supposed gifts of individuals, above the ordinary performances of a standing ministry. When they considered the spirits of the prophets as not subject to the prophets, the peace of their society was continually disturbed; and many of the regulations adopted in their political association were meant to apply a remedy to the disorder that was thus introduced.

There is no promise in Scripture of any future age like that which ushered Christianity into the world; and if stated teachers were required even in that first age, which may be called the age of the Spirit, because his operations were then visible in many that believed, it should seem that they will be more necessary in all succeeding ages, when his extraordinary gifts are withdrawn, and when, not-

* Titus i. 5.

withstanding the pretensions of the early Quakers, or of the multifarious sects in modern times, founded on the principles of fanaticism, Christians have no warrant from Scripture to expect any other, than that continued influence of the Spirit by which he "helpeth our infirmities." It cannot be said that the office of a standing ministry, although fitly vested in the apostles, was meant to expire with them; for they committed "the form of sound words," which they had taught, to "faithful men, able to teach others also;"* and to these men they appear to have conveyed part, at least, of the powers which they derived from their master. The epistle to the Philippians is addressed, "to all the saints at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons."† Peter thus exhorts "the elders; feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof."‡ In other epistles Christians are commanded "to esteem those that are over them in the Lord," and to "obey them that have the rule over them, and that watch for their souls."§ The epistles to Timothy and Titus direct them in the exercise of that authority which they had received, and mention office-bearers of different ranks in the Christian society, vested with special powers. In the book of the Revelation there are letters to the seven churches of Asia, *i. e.* to regular Christian associations then formed in seven different cities of Asia Minor; and the letters are addressed, not to the churches, although they contain much general exhortation, but to the angels, or ministers of the churches; which is a proof, that in every church there was a person distinguished from the rest, and qualified by his station to distribute the exhortations with effect.

There is one place in the New Testament, where we can trace the succession of Christian teachers beyond the immediate successors of the apostles. If you compare the 7th and 17th verses of Hebrews xiii. you will find that the apostle speaks in the 7th verse of persons then deceased, who had had the rule over the Hebrews, and had spoken to them the word of God; and in the 17th verse of persons then alive, who had the rule over them, and were at that time watching for their souls: so that the Hebrews, after having been illuminated by the apostles, and confirmed in the faith by a second set of teachers, were enjoying the ministrations of a third. The succession, which we are thus able to trace in Scripture, is agreeable to the promise which our Lord made to his apostles when he left them: *καὶ ἰδὼν, ἐγὼ μεθ' ἐμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας, ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος.* The duration of the promise was not exhausted by the time during which the apostles abode upon earth, but reaches to the end of that age which the Messiah introduced; and therefore the promise must be understood as conveying an assurance of the presence of Jesus with those, who, in all the periods of that age, succeed to the office of the apostles.

The same idea of the perpetuity of the office of the ministry is expressed by Paul in a remarkable passage, Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13. He had mentioned the gifts which Christ, when he ascended, received for men, and which he distributes to every one as he will. He states, as one immediate end attained by the distribution of the gifts, *πρὸς τὸν καταρτισμὸν τῶν ἁγίων, εἰς ἔργον διακονίας.* But this work, being, as the name

* 2 Tim. ii. 2.

† Phil. i. 1.

‡ 1 Pet. v. 1, 2.

§ 1 Thes. v. 12, 13. Heb. xiii. 17.

implies, ministerial, or subservient to a higher end, must continue till that end be attained. The higher end is, the unity in faith, and the perfection in virtue, of all the elect of God ; an end which the dispensations of providence and grace are carrying forward, but which, in the nature of things, cannot be accomplished during this state of trial. From the apostle, then, we learn, that till the end of the world, the work of the ministry is to continue, as we had learned from the promise of Jesus, that till the end of the world he is to be with those who are employed in that work.

These are the heads of argument which the members of the church of Rome, and of the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches agree in opposing to the presumptuous conclusion, by which a spirit of fanaticism would represent the offices of a standing ministry as useless ; and the consent of the great body of Christians in the use of these arguments may encourage us to assume in the beginning of this discussion, as an established point, that the general idea of church government, and the existence of a particular description of men invested with that kind of rule which church government implies, are agreeable to Scripture.

SECTION II.

INDEPENDENTS.

THE opinion which falls naturally to be stated in the second place, concerning the description of persons invested with church government, is that which was held by the Independents of the seventeenth century.

Robinson, the author of the sect to which this name properly belongs, had been educated in that presumptuous fanaticism, which regards the office of a standing ministry as useless. But conviction or expediency led him to adopt a more moderate opinion with regard to church government ; and that opinion, after being improved and digested for a course of years, was published in 1658, in the declaration of their faith, then emitted by the Independent congregations in England. The leading principle of their system is thus expressed by themselves. "Every particular society of visible professors, agreeing to walk together in the faith and order of the gospel, is a complete church, and has full power within itself to elect and ordain all church officers, to exclude all offenders, and to do all other acts relating to the edification and well-being of the church."*

According to this fundamental principle it is understood by the Independents that any number of Christians, whom neighbourhood and agreement in opinion as to the great doctrines of the gospel lead to assemble for public worship in the same place, possess within themselves all the power that is implied under the notion of church government. The whole body retains, in its own hands, the power of admitting and excluding members : but for the orderly administra-

* Neale, iv. 164.

tion of the sacraments, and the regular performance of various offices that may minister to edification, the whole body sets apart with religious solemnity, certain persons under the name of pastors, teachers, or elders, who derive their title to act in that capacity solely from the nomination of the society, and who, in virtue of that nomination, are the only persons entitled to perform within that society the acts connected with their character. As every assembly of Christians is conceived to be a complete church, immediately under Christ, and independent of all other churches, those who adopted this scheme were originally called Independents; but as that name came to be employed in a political sense, and was applied, during the commotions of the seventeenth century, to many who entertained principles hostile to civil government, those who wished to hold themselves forth as peaceable subjects of the powers that were, and as distinguished from other Christians, merely by their peculiar notions of church government, chose rather to take the name of Congregational Brethren. The name implies all that is meant by the word Independents, when used in an ecclesiastical sense, and marks this as their principle, that every separate congregation has all the powers of church government, of which it delegates such portion as it pleases to its own officers.

This principle is held with different modifications by several of the more recent sects which have arisen in Scotland, and by a considerable part of the English dissenters. From peculiar tenets they may be known by other names, but in church government they are Independents; and although the spirit of the constitution of the two established churches in Britain is most opposite to Independency, yet some approach to it may often be discerned in the sentiments, and the conduct, of many individual members of both churches. Indeed it appears to me the prevailing error of the times in relation to church government,—the opinion which, without due care in fortifying the mind, there is the greatest danger of imbibing.

In order to prove their fundamental principle the Independents attempt to show, that all the churches mentioned in the New Testament were single congregations which met in one place. But you will probably be satisfied that they fail in the attempt. The labours of the apostles in planting the four principal churches that are spoken of in the book of Acts, Jerusalem, Corinth, Antioch, and Ephesus, the success of their labours, and the number of teachers and prophets who ministered under the apostles to a multitude of believers, are mentioned in such terms as render it impossible for us to suppose, that all the Christians in any of the four cities could assemble together; more especially when we consider that the Christians were not at that time in possession of any public places of worship, and that they would be solicitous to avoid any ostentation of their number, because their meetings, instead of being authorised by the laws of the state, were obnoxious to the magistrate. Yet the different congregations, into which the Christians of every one of these four cities were from necessity divided, are spoken of in the new Testament as one body. For although the separate associations of Christians in different provinces are thus designed, “the churches through-

out all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria,"* the plural is never applied to the Christians of one city, but we read of "the church which was in Jerusalem, the church at Corinth, the church at Antioch, the church at Ephesus;" so that whatever was the bond of union among the different congregations of one city, the apostles seem to have considered them as constituting one church.

But even although we should allow the Independents the proposition which they attempt to prove, it does not appear that they would gain much. If, in the times of which the book of Acts gives the history, all the Christians of every city might conveniently assemble for worship in one place, such regulations as suited this scanty number could not be a proper pattern for after-times, when Christians multiplied beyond the possibility of meeting together: and if in the one congregation which was formed at first, many individuals and many families were united by their common faith under one government, this early union, which was all that the circumstances of the case required, is very far from implying any condemnation of that future union of different congregations, which their vicinity might prompt.

The state of the congregations described in the New Testament not furnishing Scripture-authority, or, what was called in the seventeenth century, a divine right for the Independent form of government, the plea of authority must be set aside, and we are left to try the fundamental principle of this form by those general maxims, which are founded in reason and Scripture.

In appreciating its merits, there are three concessions which will be readily made by every impartial examiner.

1. We admit that the Independent form of government is very much superior to the presumptuous, unconnected spirit of fanaticism: for it implies the perpetual obligation of the positive rites of Christianity; it provides, by the appointment of a particular order of men, for their being regularly administered; and it exhibits not a political association, but an ecclesiastical society possessing and exerting the powers, which it believes to be founded in the institution of Christ, and which it considers as necessary for its preservation.

2. We admit that church government was instituted, not for the aggrandizement of any order of men, but for the edification of the people. If the form of government adopted by the Independents is radically defective, the defect does not lie in their mistaking the object of church power, but in their confounding the source from which it flows, with the purpose for which it is conferred. They were led into the mistake by their experience of what they considered as abuses of church power, what they accounted acts of oppression and invasions of rights of conscience, under the ecclesiastical government of men who professed to derive their power from a higher source; and they thought that they should effectually guard against the introduction of such abuses in the separate societies which they formed, by declaring as their fundamental principle, that the power, which was to be exerted for their edification, resided originally in themselves, and was delegated by them to their own officers.

* Acts ix. 31.

3. We admit that cases may occur where the principles of Independents must be followed out in practice. If a body of Christians were, by any calamity, placed for a length of time in such a situation, that it was impossible for them to obtain the ministrations of a person regularly invested with the pastoral character,—placed in an island without a pastor, and separated from all other Christian societies, it would still continue their duty to join in the worship of God, and to celebrate the rites of Christianity: but that these services might be performed in a manner the most orderly, and the most agreeable to the institution of Christ which circumstances permitted, it would also be their duty to call from among themselves the persons whom they thought best qualified to preside in the public worship, and to administer the rites; and it is not to be doubted that the blessing of God would supply the unavoidable defect.

But even after these three concessions are made, the Independent form of government remains liable to strong objections, in respect both of the mode of appointment to the office of the ministry which it enacts, and of the disunion of the Christian society which it implies.

In illustrating these two objections, which are intimately connected together, I shall state the substance of the treatises written in the seventeenth century, in opposition to the congregational brethren.

I. This method of conveying the office of the ministry by the act of the people not only is destitute of the authority of any example in the New Testament, but is contrary to the spirit of all the directions there given upon that subject. Our Lord chose men to be apostles, endowed them with the necessary qualifications, and then gave them a commission to preach and to baptize. We read in the short history of their progress, that they ordained elders in the churches. Paul speaks to Timothy of “the gift which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands, of the gift which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbyter:”* he says to Titus, “for this cause, left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee;”† and he enjoins Timothy to “lay hands suddenly on no man.”‡ These passages, when taken together, seem to imply that the office of the ministry, which Timothy and Titus had received from Paul, and other office-bearers joined with him, was with like solemn imposition of hands to be conveyed by them to others. It is true that in Acts vi. the apostles desire the multitude of the disciples to look out among them seven men of honest report to superintend, with the name of deacons, the daily ministration of their charity. But although there was a manifest propriety in desiring the people to propose the persons, whom they judged worthy of being intrusted with the distribution of their charity, yet the men thus nominated did not begin the distribution till they received from the apostles a solemn appointment; and with regard to those offices in the church which were not, like the office of deacons, chiefly secular, but which implied the exercise of spiritual authority, there is not any passage, which, when fairly examined, will be found to intimate that it was conferred by the act of the people.

* 1 Tim. iv. 14. 2 Tim. i. 6.

† Titus i. 5.

‡ 1 Tim. v. 22.

One passage which is chiefly relied on as giving countenance to Independency is Acts xiv. 23 ; *χειροτονησάμεντες δὲ αὐτοῖς πρεσβυτέρους κατ' ἐκκλησίαν*. But besides that *χειροτονεῖν*, before the time of Luke, was used for simple designation, without the exercise of suffrage, as is plain from his own expression, Acts x. 41, it is applied in this passage, not to the people, but to Paul and Barnabas, so that whatever be the meaning of the word, it can only be considered as making known the part, which these disciples took in the appointment of elders.

Accordingly the qualifications of those who were to be made bishops, and elders, and deacons, are mentioned, not in epistles to the churches, but in epistles to Timothy and Titus, who are directed to the proper method of trying such as might be admitted to take part with them in overseeing the church of God. The judgment of the qualifications is vested in those who, having been themselves found qualified, may be supposed capable of trying others; their act, following upon their approbation, is the solemn investiture of those whom they have found worthy; and they are the instruments by which Jesus Christ conveys to that order of men, which he meant to continue in his church till the end of the world, the authority implied in the exercise of their office.

II. The second great objection to the Independent form of government is the disunion of the Christian society which it implies. It considers the followers of Jesus as constituting so many separate associations, every one of which cares for itself, is complete within itself, and has only a casual connexion with others. If, therefore, in the exercise of the separate authority of any congregation, wrong be done to an individual, he is left, while he remains a member of that congregation, without the possibility of redress; and if neighbouring associations should quarrel, which, considering the caprice and violence of human passions, is perhaps not much less likely than that they will live in peace, no method is provided for terminating their dissensions, or for preserving, amidst these dissensions, the continuance of their agreement in any common principles. But this is directly opposite to the Scripture idea of the Christian society, or Catholic church, which is represented as "one body," professing one faith, separated, indeed, by the necessity of circumstances into associations meeting in different places, but retaining amidst this separation all the unity which is possible. To this Catholic church, founded by the labours of the apostles, spread in idolatrous nations by the preaching of those whom the apostles ordained, and still maintained and extended in the world by the ministrations of all the servants of Christ, the promises are made: for its gifts continue to be distributed; and the rites, which the great body of Christians agree in celebrating, are the rites not of this or that association, but of the church of Christ. A person must receive baptism from a particular association; but, by being baptized, he becomes a member of the great society; or, in the language of the book of Acts, "he is added to the church." He must join in the Lord's Supper with a particular body of Christians; but by eating that one bread, and drinking that one cup, he holds communion with all in every place, who "show the Lord's death." When he forfeits, by his own fault, his right to be numbered amongst that body of Christians with whom he formerly associated, he ceases to be a mem-

ber of the Catholic church; and he remains without the church, till he be found worthy of being re-admitted by those who had excluded him.

According to these views, the different meetings of Christians are branches of one society, united as parts of a whole; and the first thing which enters into our conception is the whole, while the circumstances, which rendered it necessary for this whole to be divided, are a matter only of secondary consideration. When, therefore, in our speculations concerning that government which "God hath set in the church," we begin with considering government in reference to the whole, and from thence descend to the several divisions, we follow the order of nature. Whereas, if, like the Independents, we confine our attention to the divisions, we lose sight of the unity of that which is divided; and, as we invert the process by which the society that we analyze was constituted and enlarged, we shall probably arrive at conclusions unfounded in fact, and very remote from the intention of the Author of the society.

If every association of Christians be viewed as independent of every other, it will unavoidably follow that ordination is the act of the people; for whence is a separate unconnected body of Christians to receive a pastor, unless from their own nomination? But if we preserve the view of a great society divided into many branches, then it follows, that in the same manner as every one who is baptized becomes a member of the Catholic church, so every one who is ordained, by the laying on of hands of the office-bearers of the church, becomes a minister of the church universal. He is invested with that character, in a manner the most agreeable to the example and the directions contained in the New Testament; and by this investiture he receives authority to perform all the acts belonging to the character. He cannot perform these acts to the church universal, because it is nowhere assembled; and the separation of the church universal renders it expedient, that the place in which he is to perform them shall be marked out to him. But this assignation of place is merely a matter of order, which is not essential to his character, which does not detract from the powers implied in his character, and which serves no other purpose than to specify the bounds in which the church universal, by the hands of whose ministers he received the power, requires that the powers shall be exercised.

What is the most proper manner of assigning the limits for the exercise of the powers conveyed by ordination, is a question which has been violently agitated both in ancient and in modern times. It was the subject of the controversy which was waged for many centuries between the Pope and the princes of Europe, about what was called the investiture of church benefices; and it is the same question which has appeared in Scotland under the form of a competition between patronage, a call by heritors and elders, and popular election. The decision of this question, in every country, depends upon civil regulations; and if the church proceeds without the authority of the state, to assign the limits of exercising ministerial powers, she introduces a collision between the civil and ecclesiastical governments. Her business is to convey the powers to those whom she finds qualified. By ordination they become ministers of the

church universal ; for, having been tried by a particular branch of the church, acting in the name of Jesus, and in virtue of the trust derived from him, they receive authority and a commission to perform all the acts, which belong to those who are called in Scripture ambassadors, stewards, rulers, and overseers. Subsequent to this authority and commission, and essentially distinct from it in nature, although often conjoined with it in practice, is the invitation or appointment, applying the exercise of the authority to a particular district of the church. The invitation, when Christians are not recognised by the laws of the land as entitled to their protection, is, of necessity, and of right, the act of the people to whom the person is to minister ; but when Christianity enjoys the benefit of being incorporated with the constitution of the state, it comes, in consequence of that civil advantage, to be modified in such manner as the government of the state is pleased to direct.

You will find yourselves involved in inextricable difficulties upon many questions in church government, unless you are careful thus to separate in your minds ordination, which is the appointment of Jesus Christ, conveying a character by the instrumentality of the office-bearers of his church, from the election of a minister, which is the appointment of men applying or limiting the exercise of this character, in such manner as they please, and with more or less wisdom, as it happens. It is the leading feature in the system of Independency to confound these two ; and you will find, in your future experience of ecclesiastical business, that all the approaches to Independency, which appear in the sentiments or the conduct of particular persons, arise from their not keeping them perfectly distinct. Whenever ordination is considered as the act of Jesus Christ, by his office-bearers constituting a minister of the church universal, the idea of one great society is preserved. The whole may be diversified in outward circumstances, but it does not cease to be a whole ; for, from this principle there result subordination to superiors, which is essential to church government, and a bond of union amongst those, who are so far removed in place as not to be amenable to the same earthly superior. But whenever ordination is confounded with election, the unity of the great society is lost ; the whole is crumbled into factions ; there is no legal redress for the wrong which may be done by small unrelated jurisdictions ; and there is no constitutional mean of deciding the controversies, which, arising among the separate associations merely from their neighbourhood, may disturb their peace and embitter their minds.

I have entered thus fully into the discussion of the Independent form of government, because, in canvassing its merits, I have been led to lay down some fundamental principles of church government, in which Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians are agreed, and which we shall carry along with us in comparing their different schemes. These principles are the foundation of a distinction, which, although not expressed in Scriptural terms, appears to us agreeable to Scriptural views ; I mean the distinction very early made between the clergy and the laity. We shall afterwards find, that this distinction has been supposed to imply powers and exemptions on the part of the clergy, to which no order of men derives any title from the

gospel of Christ ; and a submission on the part of the laity, to which no order of men is there degraded. But the distinction is not the less real that it has been abused ; and it is proper that it should be maintained, both in opposition to those, who add to all the other contempt which they pour upon the gospel, by representing the Christian priesthood as a political contrivance, a continuation of the same craft which imposed upon the vulgar in the times of idolatry ; and also in opposition to those Christians, who, professing to reverence the Scriptures, attempt to guard against the abuse of church power, and to reconcile the mention made of it in Scripture to their notions of liberty, by representing it as given by Christ to the people, and transferred by them at their pleasure to those whom they choose. Against both, we Presbyterians join with the church of Rome and the church of England, in holding that the persons vested with church government derive their powers, not from the people, but from Jesus Christ by his ministers ; and our church has, in her Confession of Faith, expressed this fundamental proposition in the following words ; “The Lord Jesus, as King and Head of his church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church-officers, distinct from the civil magistrate.”

SECTION III.

CHURCH OF ROME.

IN stating the system of the church of Rome, with regard to the description of persons invested with church government, which is diametrically opposite to that of the Independents, it is necessary to begin with illustrating the distinction between those, who are called Papists, and those, who are called Roman Catholics.

The Papists hold that the bishop of Rome, commonly known by the name of the Pope, has, as the successor of Peter, the prince of the apostles, a primacy over the great society of Christians ; that he is the vicar of Christ upon earth, the visible head of the universal church, whose power extends over all its members ; that as he may himself enact laws binding upon the whole church, determine all controversies by his own infallible authority, and either inflict censures or grant absolution according to his pleasure, so he is the fountain of pastoral jurisdiction and dignity, from whom all who exercise the powers of church government in any district of the Christian world ought to receive their commission, to whom they are bound to swear true obedience in the discharge of their office, and to whom they are accountable ; that as their persons and their actions are in all things under his control, so the sentences which they pronounce in the exercise of the powers committed to them are subject to his revisal ; that appeals may be made from all ecclesiastical judicatories to the judgment of the bishop of Rome ; but that he himself is not obliged to give account to any, and that from his sentence there is no appeal.

This is the complete system of church government avowed in the public confessions of their faith, by those who are properly called

Papists. But this system is not held in its full extent by all who profess the doctrine, and adhere to the communion of the church of Rome. The Papists derive their name from their attachment to the Pope, their belief of his infallibility, and their submission to his sovereign and uncontrollable power. Those who call themselves Roman Catholics acknowledge that the bishop of Rome, the most dignified member of the church universal, and the successor of Peter, holds a primacy and superiority which they consider as a common centre of unity to the whole society, and to which they are willing to pay a becoming respect. But they do not allow the personal infallibility of the Pope; they consider the head as subject, no less than the members, to the decrees of the church universal; and if the head should attempt to infringe the constitutions of the church universal, should violate the rights of particular churches, or should err in matters of faith, they conceive that it is competent for a general council to correct his mal-administration: to maintain the liberties of the whole body, and of the several parts in opposition to his encroachments; to defend the truth which he abandons; and, if other means do not appear sufficient, to provide for the safety or reformation of the church, by suspending or deposing him from his office.

This doctrine was declared by many general councils held in the 15th and 16th centuries, several of which proceeded to follow out their doctrine into practice, by pronouncing sentence upon Popes, whom they considered as heretical or contumacious. It was the subject of endless discussions in those days, between the doctors of Italy, who maintained the infallible and uncontrollable authority of the Pope, and the doctors of France, who considered him as subject to the decrees of general councils. The former boldly set the Pope above all general councils; the latter held that no *Papa* simply, but *Papa cum concilio*, is the head of the church. This last opinion, although it appears to impose a most reasonable restraint upon the exorbitant power of one man, was involved in many difficulties. For, even admitting the opinion to be true, it remains to be inquired, who is to summon the general council which is to control and try the Pope; who is to preside in it; who are to have the right of voting, and what constitutes a free general council, in whose censure of the first officer of the church the whole Christian world is bound to acquiesce? The difficulties attending these questions, which satisfy us in our days, that a general council is a thing impracticable, were very much multiplied to those, who, even while they wished to correct the abuses of papal power, professed to retain a high veneration for the bishop of Rome, as the successor of Peter; and it is not always easy to reconcile the connexion, which the Roman Catholics are desirous to maintain with the Pope, and the doctrine by which they make him inferior to a council.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, however, this doctrine spread, both before and after the Reformation, through many parts of Christendom, the inhabitants of which wished to be delivered from the grievances of papal usurpation, although they were not prepared to follow the first reformers, so far as to depart from the received articles of faith, and to separate from the communion of the church of Rome. It became, even in the seventeenth century, the national creed of

France, where the civil and ecclesiastical powers united in declaring, not only that the Pope is, in spiritual matters, subject to a general council, but that, in temporal matters, he has no sovereignty or authority over the rulers of those states who are in communion with him. These two positions constitute, what were called in those days, the liberties of the Gallican church. They have been uniformly and zealously maintained in opposition to the claims of the Pope, even while profound veneration was expressed for his person, and while the established faith of the kingdom consisted of the tenets of the Apostolical See of Rome, without any mixture, often without any toleration of the opinions of the Reformers.

The Catholics of Great Britain have, of late, solemnly disclaimed that entire subjection to the Pope, which forms the distinguishing character of Papists; and, instead of taking the name of Roman Catholics, which might seem to imply a connection approaching to a dependence upon the church of Rome, they call themselves simply the Catholics of Great Britain. Even in those countries which profess still to believe in the sovereignty of the Pope, the changes upon the state of Europe, the progress of science, and the view of those blessings which their neighbours have derived from the Reformation, are undermining that fabric which was reared in times of ferocity and ignorance; and the papal power, which has already lost almost all its terrors to those who acknowledge its existence, will probably, at no very distant period, become, throughout the whole extent of Christendom, the tale of former years.

The progress of Popery is one of the most interesting portions of ecclesiastical history. The slow, but sure steps with which this power advanced, during a course of ages, to the greatness which it attained, the skill and artifice with which its pretensions were gradually extended, the multiplicity of interests which were combined in its support, and the profound policy with which it distributed through all Christian states many zealous champions of its claim—all together form a picture, which arrests the attention of every intelligent observer of human affairs, and is fitted to administer much useful instruction. It is not my province to fill up or to colour this picture. I have only to discuss the arguments upon which the Bishop of Rome professed to build his claims: and if these arguments shall appear to you a very slender foundation for such a superstructure, you must have recourse to the history of popery for an explication of the manner in which it was reared, and of the props by which it was supported; you must recollect that arguments, which the plainest understanding now perceives to be remote, inconclusive, and inapplicable to the subject, found the minds of men in such a state of preparation for receiving them, that they were assented to without being examined; and you must not be surprised, if an ordinary eye, now that the charm is broken, can discern all the deformity of an object, which was long seen at a distance, through a deceitful medium, and was esteemed too sacred and too magnificent for close inspection.

The extent of the papal power receives a specious support from the unity, which it seems to give to the Catholic church. While the Independent form of government breaks one great society into many unconnected parts, the sovereignty of the Pope forms a common centre

of unity to the various associations, into which Christians, from the necessity of circumstances, must be divided. If there is one visible head, whom all of them acknowledge, his authority, pervading the great society, controlling and regulating all ecclesiastical jurisdiction, is fitted to preserve that consent in articles of faith, and that uniformity in worship and rites, which, however agreeable to the nature of the Christian society, the wide extent of it seems to render impracticable without such a paramount authority. "The Son of God," says Bossuet, in his *Exposition of the Doctrine of the Catholic Church*, "being desirous his church should be one, and solidly built upon unity, hath established and instituted the primacy of St. Peter to maintain and cement it; upon which account, we acknowledge this primacy in the successors of St. Peter, the prince of the apostles, which is the common centre of all Catholic unity."

The argument, when proposed in this general form, has a specious appearance. But there are many steps between the first position, that Jesus Christ intended his church should be one, and the last position, that the primacy of the Bishop of Rome ought to be acknowledged by all Christians; and when we come to analyze the argument, by tracing the connexion which the first position has with the last, the weakness of the whole cause opens upon us at every step.

Although Jesus often expressed a desire that his church should be one, and although an endeavour to maintain unity is earnestly recommended to his disciples, it does not follow that they were to have that kind of unity which arises from subjection to one visible head. Jesus is himself styled "the head of the body, the church."* His prayer for those who should believe on him, through the word of the apostles, is this, "that they, Father, may be one in us."† When the apostle speaks of one body, one spirit, one faith, he speaks also of one Lord, that is, Christ.‡ As this Lord shall continue till the end of the world to rule in his kingdom, he may employ other means besides the government of a visible head to preserve unity. It is possible too, that knowledge of the truth, attachment to one Saviour, and the excitements of love and mutual forbearance inspired by his religion, may be the chief bonds of union which he intended should subsist amongst his followers; and that attempts to establish a stricter uniformity than what results from these principles may be attended with greater evils, and may be more repugnant to the spirit of the gospel, than those breaches of unity which the power of a visible head might correct.

When perfect wisdom and perfect goodness are united in the character of a person, his power will be exerted for the best purposes; and the extent of his power may insure the harmony, as well as the happiness, of those who are subject to it. But such a character is not to be found upon earth; and all the experience of mankind teaches them to provide for the security of their rights, by imposing such limitations as may guard most effectually against the abuse of power. In one place, Matth. xx. 25, 26, our Lord warns his disciples against thinking that they were entitled to exercise in his name that kind of co-active authority, by which the princes of the earth main-

* Col. i. 18.

† John xvii. 21.

‡ Ephes. iv. 4, 5.

tain their sovereignty. In another place, Matth. xxiii. 8, 9, he warns his disciples against submitting their understandings to men, and requires the free and manly exercise of their own judgment, both as a testimony of the respect due to him, and as a security against their being turned aside from his doctrine. Although such warnings, when compared with other passages of Scripture, do not condemn church government in general, they certainly modify the authority that is to be exercised, and the subjection that is to be yielded; and therefore they imply a condemnation of a form of church government, which, by committing Christians in all places of the world to the inspection and the absolute government of one man, exalts him to a station, and intrusts him with an office, to which the natural powers of the wisest and the best of the sons of men are wholly inadequate.

It will be said, indeed, that inspiration can easily supply the unavoidable defects of human nature, and that the information and comprehension of the vicar of Christ upon earth may, in this way, be rendered commensurate to the extent of his office. But as our judgment of the proper seasons and degrees of inspiration ought always to proceed, not upon our own speculations, but upon our experience of what God has done; so when we attend to the fact in this case, it does not appear that such a measure of inspiration as the office requires has been bestowed, because the effects of the sovereignty claimed and exercised by the bishop of Rome have by no means corresponded to the advantages, which are stated as a presumption in support of the claim. Protestants hold that it has not preserved purity of doctrine; for they think they are able to prove that the faith of the church of Rome is, in many important articles, contrary to Scripture. All who read ecclesiastical history must acknowledge that it has not preserved the unity of the church; for the Eastern church never submitted to the authority of the Pope. Many parts of Europe have, since the Reformation, disclaimed all subjection to him; and there has, in all ages, been much difference of opinion, even amongst those who professed to believe that he is the vicar of Christ. Popes have contradicted one another upon articles of faith. the controversies respecting predestination and grace have agitated the Romish no less than the Reformed churches; and the attempts of the Roman Pontiff, by his authority, to define the ceremonies of religion, have often produced altercation, mutual hatred, and persecution.

Had the Roman empire maintained its ascendancy over the nations of the earth, advantages might have resulted from the primacy of a visible head of the church. If from the same city, which was the mistress of the world, the mandates of the supreme ruler of the Christian society had been transmitted to the separate associations in the most remote regions, this would have been a centre of unity, however discordant from the simple unassuming spirit of the Gospel, yet certainly analogous to the political situation of human affairs, and admirably fitted to preserve an uniformity in religious rites. But when the Roman empire was dismembered, when independent princes arose throughout the whole extent of Christendom, and that civil government, which, in all the different modifications that circumstances may give it in different countries, is the ordinance of God,

was vested in the hands of persons who had no connexion with Rome, the existence of a supreme ecclesiastical power residing in that city, and issuing its mandates to the ends of the earth, came to be attended with insuperable difficulties; and what in the former case might have been a centre of unity, was converted into a principle of discord, and a perpetual source of contention. A sovereign pontiff, who claimed from the clergy in every state an implicit obedience to all his injunctions, who could summon them at his pleasure from any part of the world, who reviewed all their sentences, and who could call to his own court the trial of any cause, which came in the first instance before them, was formidable to civil government. This foreign jurisdiction interrupted the orderly proceedings of every state; it weakened the authority of the magistrate; it created an interest in opposition to the public good; and it afforded various pretexts for superinducing very dangerous civil claims. Accordingly, the history of a great part of Europe, and particularly of Britain for a considerable time, is occupied with collisions between the jurisdiction claimed by the Pope, and that which the sovereigns of Europe considered as of right belonging to themselves within their own territories. In England the Reformation did not begin with the discussion of points of doctrine. It originated in resistance to the growing encroachments of the court of Rome; and it was accomplished by law, because the sovereign, the clergy, and the people felt that their rights were invaded.

Any person who recollects the submission which our Lord and his apostles uniformly yielded to the civil power, the many exhortations to obedience which the epistles contain, and the quiet accommodating spirit in all things not sinful, which the Gospel forms, will not readily believe that the method, which Christ adopted for preserving the unity of his church, was a method so hostile to the peace of society; and any person who considers that the Gospel, assuming the character of an universal religion, delivers, with consummate wisdom, doctrines and precepts which readily apply to all different situations, will perceive the inconsistency of supposing that it would create a perpetual dependence upon a particular city, in which one of its ministers resided; and by this single circumstance, would subject the disciples, who were to be gathered out of all nations, to many of the inconveniences of a local institution.

It appears, then, that when we come to reason from the unity of the church to the primacy of the bishop of Rome, there arise, upon general grounds, very strong objections against this specious argument; and we require the most satisfying direct evidence that a method of preserving unity, in itself so exceptionable, is, indeed, the appointment of Christ. The Papists assert that it is: and if they could prove what they assert, our notions of inexpediency would yield to his authority.

Their assertion consists of three positions, every one of which must be proved; that our Lord gave to Peter a primacy over all the other apostles—that Peter was Bishop of Rome—and that it was the intention of Christ, that the powers possessed by Peter should be transmitted to the Bishops of Rome in all succeeding ages. If they fail in the proof of any one of these positions, the primacy of the Pope be-

comes a human invention, which may be wise or unwise, but which cannot be regarded as the institution of Christ.

As to the primacy of Peter, they argue from Peter's appearing throughout the Gospels more ready to speak and to act than the other apostles, being often peculiarly addressed by our Lord, and often answering in the name of the rest; from his being placed at the head of every complete enumeration of the apostles, and called by Matthew, "the first;" from our Lord's saying, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not;" from his giving him a command to feed his sheep; and from these remarkable words, "Thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church; and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." As to the second position, they argue partly from its being said by some ancient writers, that Peter lived for some time at Rome, that Peter and Paul founded the Christian church there, and that Peter died there; and partly from the expression at the end of his first epistle. "The church of Babylon saluteth you." It is known that Babylon, in the book of the Revelation, is the mystical name for Rome, the only city which answers to the description there given; and it is supposed that Peter, by using this name in his epistle, meant to give an intimation that Rome was the place of his residence. As to the third position, they find no support in Scripture. But they argue from tradition; from the deference which they say was in all ages paid to the Bishop of Rome; from the names given to him by ancient writers; from the probability that the successors of Peter would be distinguished above the successors of the other apostles; and from the miracles or other extraordinary gifts, by which his claim to infallibility and primacy has been attested.

Such are the arguments alleged in support of the three essential positions of the Popish system: I shall now give a specimen of the answers that are made to them.

As to the primacy of Peter, it is admitted that as in every body of men there are individuals who appear to take the lead of others, the fervour of Peter's spirit rendered him, upon all occasions, forward to speak; and that upon account either of this fervour or of his age he is not only called the first, but seems at some times to have acted as the foreman or speaker of the apostolical college. But it is not admitted that this implies any superiority of office; for, when our Lord first called the apostles, and when he spoke to them after his resurrection, and immediately before his ascension, he gave them the same commission, and invested them with the same powers. He said that they should sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.* Before their minds were enlightened, they disputed which should be the greatest; but, after the day of Pentecost, they appear to have understood that there was a perfect equality amongst them; and there is not, in the epistles, the most distant mention of any prerogative enjoyed by one of the apostles. Assembled in a council at Jerusalem, Peter does not preside.† He is sent by the other apostles, along with John, to Samaria.‡ The work of the apostleship was afterwards distributed between Peter and Paul. To the former

* Matt. xix. 28.

† Acts xv.

‡ Acts viii. 14.

was committed the gospel of the circumcision, *i. e.* the office of preaching to the Jews; to the latter the gospel of the uncircumcision, *i. e.* the office of preaching to the Gentiles.* Paul says that in the discharge of his office “he was not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles;”† and upon one occasion he withstood Peter to the face, reprehending a part of his conduct which he thought blameworthy.‡ The most striking circumstance in the history of Peter is the solemn denial of his Master, which does not appear to lay a good foundation for the infallibility of his successors, which was more culpable than the cowardice of the other apostles, and to which there is a reference in the prayer of our Lord for Peter, in the message sent him after the resurrection, “Go tell my disciples and Peter,” and in the manner of giving him the charge, “Feed my sheep.” The same charge is said to be committed by the Holy Ghost to all ministers or overseers ποιμαίνειν τὴν ἐκκλησίαν. But because Peter had thrice denied his Master, he is solemnly re-instated in the office from which he had fallen, by our Lord’s saying to him thrice, ποιμαίνε, βοσκέ τα πρόβατα μου.§

In examining the strength of what the Papists account their impregnable fortress, the words addressed to Peter in Matthew xvi. 16, 17, 18, you will find that these words were spoken upon occasion of a question put to all the apostles, “Whom say ye that I am?” The answer is made by Peter, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” But it is obvious that here, as at other times, he speaks in the name of his brethren as well as in his own name; and, therefore, although our Lord, in his reply, addresses the person who had spoken, it is natural to understand the promise which he gives as a reward of the confession, extended to all in whose name the confession had been made. Accordingly, one part of the promise, “Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven,” is repeated by the same Evangelist soon after, Matt. xviii. 18, and is there addressed to all the apostles. And a promise, which we understand to be the same in substance, “Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained,” was made to ten of the apostles after the resurrection.|| It is understood by that great body of Christians who do not hold the primacy of Peter, that these two passages express all that is meant by the phrase, “I will give thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven;” and, therefore, as no other powers but such as all the apostles enjoyed were at any future time communicated to Peter, or exercised by him, we hold, that although our Lord says “I will give thee the keys,” he is conveying, by these words, to all the apostles, the powers which we shall afterwards find to be implied in the lawful exercise of church government. There is another part, indeed, of the promise in Matt. xvi. which appears to be special to Peter,—“And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” These words, say the Papists, assign to Peter a dignity and importance in the establishment of the Christian church, that cannot be common to him and the other apostles, because

* Gal. ii. 7.

† 2 Cor. xi. 5.

‡ Gal. ii. 11.

§ John xxi. 15, 17.

|| John xx. 23.

it is connected with his name. To this argument two answers are given. The one is, that this expression does not necessarily imply that the church was to be built upon Peter. As in the Old Testament there was often a close connexion in meaning between the name given to a person, and some transaction to which he had a special relation; and as our Lord was accustomed in all his discourses to refer to surrounding objects, or to things familiar to his hearers, so here, when he means to speak of the stability of his church, he alludes to the import of the name, which he had given to Simon when he called him to be a disciple. Hell is personified, representing the enemy and destroyer of mankind, who brought death into the world. The gates of hell are all the power and policy which this person can employ, because the gates of cities were strongly fortified, and they were the places where the wise men of the city met to deliberate. The gates of hell shall not prevail against my church, for it is founded upon that confession now made by thee, which, as the name given thee imports, is immoveable. He does not say, "Upon thee will I build my church." He does not even say, *ἐπὶ τῷ πετρῷ*. But *ὅτι εἰς πέτρον, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ πετρᾷ οἰκοδομήσω τὴν ἐκκλησίαν μου*, changing the substantive noun, it would seem, in order to intimate that he meant only an allusion to the name, and not the person to whom the name belonged. The confession made by Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," is adopted by all Christians, and is the foundation of the Christian church. There would have been no Christian church, if this confession had not been made by some; and the Christian church will continue till the end of the world, because, as the proposition is true in itself, so there never will be wanting some, who believe and acknowledge the truth of it. All the early Christian writers understood *ταύτῃ τῇ πετρᾷ* to mean the confession that Jesus is the Christ; and both the sense and the expression lead us to follow their interpretation.

But there is another answer to the argument of the Papists. If the allusion here made to the name of the person who uttered this confession, should be admitted to imply that there is a sense, in which the church was built upon him as well as upon his confession, still that sense must be so figurative and improper, as not to convey any power over the other apostles. For the only person who can be truly regarded as the foundation of the Christian church is the divine author of it. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." He is the rock upon whom the whole building stands secure; and, therefore, many understand *ταύτῃ τῇ πετρᾷ* to mean Christ. The apostles, indeed, are sometimes conjoined with him upon account of their labours in making the first converts. "Ye are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."* The wall of the New Jerusalem, which John saw, "had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."† These two passages extend to all the apostles the honour given to Peter, and are to be interpreted in the same figurative sense. According to this figurative sense the promise was fulfilled. For as all the apostles laboured in

* Ephes. ii. 20.

† Rev. xxi. 14.

laying the foundation of the church, so Peter had the honour of preaching the first sermon after the effusion of the Holy Ghost, by which three thousand souls were added to the church; and "God also made choice among the apostles that the Gentiles by his mouth," when he was sent to Cornelius, "should hear the word of the gospel, and believe." In this sense it may be said that the keys of the kingdom of heaven, *i. e.* of the dispensation of the gospel, were given to Peter; for his preaching opened the door by which all that believe are admitted, and the zeal, with which he declared to others the truth which he had confessed, was the beginning of the gathering of that church, which has continued to increase, and which shall never perish from the earth.

By one or other of the rational interpretations which I have mentioned, Protestants think they are able to remove the countenance, which this singular expression may appear to give to the high claims of a primacy in Peter over the other apostles; a claim manifestly contradicted by the whole strain of the rest of the New Testament, and by the analogy of faith.

On the other two positions I need not dwell. When you examine the evidence that Peter died bishop of Rome, you will find it extremely doubtful whether he ever was in that city. It is a question in the ordinary systems, *An Petrus Romæ fuerit, ibique episcopatum per plures annos tenuerit*; and the arguments for the negative are much the strongest. Innumerable difficulties, in point of chronology, arise from supposing that Peter resided at Rome; and his being bishop of that city contradicts the distribution made between Paul and him, by which Peter was the apostle of the Jews, and Paul of the Gentiles. Paul makes no mention of him in his Epistle to the Romans. Peter never speaks of having been at Rome; and no reason occurs why the name of Babylon, in the end of his first Epistle, should be understood to mean any thing else than the ancient capital of the Assyrian empire, which continued the metropolis of those districts, to the strangers scattered through which that epistle is addressed.

If Peter was not bishop of Rome, the popes are not his successors. But even admitting that he had been bishop of that city, their claim of deriving from him, and of continuing in all ages to enjoy, the primacy which they suppose our Lord conferred upon his apostle, rests upon evidence so slender, and so inapplicable to the subject, that it is fatiguing to expose the weakness of it. This third position, that the bishops of Rome, as the successors of Peter, possess the primacy by which he was distinguished, involves this manifest absurdity, that the apostle John, "the disciple whom Jesus loved," was, for the thirty years during which he survived the other apostles, subject to the bishop of Rome, the successor of another apostle. The position assumes as its grounds, a supposed expediency which we saw formerly does not exist, a power of working miracles which are known to be false, a succession which has often been interrupted, a tradition which, far from being authentic and uniform, often contradicts the position, and is often manifestly forged when it appears to speak in support of it. The infallibility and primacy of the Pope have been disclaimed by many bishops of Rome, and were for many ages disputed by the church: and we are under no necessity of having

recourse to privileges derived from Peter, in order to account for the power which the bishops of Rome long exercised, because we can easily trace both the first introduction of that claim, and the manner in which it was extended and recognised. In the pre-eminence allowed by the councils of the church to the bishops of principal cities, in the ancient dignity of the city of Rome, and in the opportunities which the bishops of that city derived from the removal of the seat of empire to Constantinople, we find the circumstances which gave occasion to the claim. In a deep and persevering policy which accommodated its measures to the times, and availed itself of every favourable occurrence, we find a satisfying account of the progress and establishment of those spiritual and civil pretensions, which subjected a great part of the Christian world to a tyranny inconsistent with the genius of Christianity, degrading to the human mind, and destructive of the tranquillity and prosperity of nations.

The Christians of former days, who struggled to emancipate themselves from this tyranny, were encouraged in their exertions by regarding the Pope, meaning by that name not any individual, but the pretended succession of vicars of Christ, as the antichrist, whose appearance and whose destruction are foretold in Scripture. Protestants continue to find in the characters of papal usurpation a literal fulfilment of various predictions concerning the corruptions of Christianity; and their faith in the truth of their religion is confirmed, by tracing the correspondence between the prediction and the event. It may therefore be useful to subjoin to the argumentative view of the third form of church government, that scriptural and historical view of it which arises from attending to the train and connexion of the prophecies respecting this subject. I take as the ground-work of the observations about to be made, the first part of 2 Thess. ii.

This second epistle was written at no great distance of time from the first, principally with a view to correct an error which prevailed among the Thessalonians. From a mistaken apprehension of the meaning of some expressions in the first letter, or by the artifice of some false teachers, they had been led to conceive that the day of judgment was at hand, and their minds being wholly occupied with the tremendous prospect, they neglected the ordinary business of life, and waited in consternation and dismay for the coming of the Lord. The apostle hastens to undeceive and relieve their minds. He declares that no expression ever used by him bore that interpretation; and he brings to their recollection some parts of his discourses when at Thessalonica, which might have satisfied them that this day of the Lord was not at hand, because he had given notice of a series of important events which were first to take place. These events are the apostasy, the revelation of the man of sin, his continuing for some time to act in the character which he assumed, and his destruction. I call it the apostasy, for the expression in our English Bibles, "a falling away," is by no means equivalent to the Greek word *ἡ ἀποστασία*, the departing from the faith, as it is rendered 1 Tim. iv. 1, corrupting the simplicity and purity of the gospel. The article prefixed to it, "the apostasy," marks not only that it would be great and signal, but that it had been foretold that it might be known, and that it was to be expected by those who studied the ancient prophets. In

the progress of this apostasy, there was to be revealed or made manifest ὁ ἀνθρώπος τῆς ἀμαρτίας, ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας. This does not necessarily denote a single person. But as the high priest under the Jewish law meant the persons who in succeeding ages bore that office, “the man of sin” may denote a succession of persons, who, as well as the apostasy, had been foretold, and so might be known; and who deserved that name, either from being infamous for their own wickedness, or very instrumental in promoting the wickedness of others. The title, “the son of perdition,” having been applied by our Lord to Judas, and being transferred to this man of sin, may suggest that, under the semblance of a friend, he should betray his master, and certainly intimates the destruction ordained for those whom he corrupted, and for himself. This man of sin, or the succession of persons who deserve that name, is further described in the 4th verse, as an enemy to the truth, exerting his power in opposition to that which is truly the cause of God,—as assuming great state and dignity, exalting himself above those civil powers, which are called in Scripture, Gods, above all that is held in reverence by men,—yet preserving the appearance of an ecclesiastic, for “he sitteth in the temple of God,” which, as the Jewish temple was soon to be destroyed, can mean nothing but the Christian church. Continuing, therefore, outwardly a member of the church, and grounding his power upon the station which he held there, he was to claim divine honours, to take to himself the name and titles of God, and to show himself, to those who follow him, as a God. There is, in all this, a striking resemblance to the succession of persons who, in the progress of the corruptions of the church of Rome, encouraged sin by many of their doctrines and practices, opposed the truth, assumed titles, and claimed powers which belong to no mortal. But bare resemblance is not sufficient to warrant this application of the prophecy. We must not only perceive that the description here given may apply to the succession of the bishops of Rome, but we must discover limiting circumstances, which prevent us from applying the description to any other. Some such limiting circumstances the apostle seems to suppose were known to the Thessalonians, for he refers in the 5th verse to an explication of the subject of his prophecy, which he had given when he was with them. But the reference is so short and obscure, that, whatever it might bring to the recollection of the Thessalonians, it conveys no information to us. The 5th and 7th verses give no hint of what it was, that restrained the manifestation of the man of sin. They only declare that the Thessalonians knew it. In order, then, to discover those limiting circumstances which are hinted at without being explained, we must recollect that all the prophecies of Scripture, from the beginning to the end of the Bible, form one continued scheme. The more ancient and the more recent predictions point to the same great dispensation of Providence, and they throw light upon one another. The prophecy in this chapter speaks of a corruption of Christianity, which was to attain its height in a future time, but was already beginning to work. Now the other inspired writers, who received power from God to speak of the same event, are Daniel the prophet, and John the divine. Paul comes between the two: and his words may receive illustration from both.

There was imparted to Daniel, a man greatly beloved of God, a vision, Dan. vii. which was, in part, explained to him, and which, by means of that explication, is clearly understood to represent four great empires which succeeded one another, and the course of whose history led to the times and the fortunes of the church of Christ. The empire of Babylon is represented by the lion that had eagle's wings, upon account of the rapidity and extent of the conquests of Nebuchadnezzar. The kingdom of the Medes and Persians is represented by the bear, a voracious animal which thirsts after blood, because they exercised the greatest cruelty against the Babylonians, and are called by the prophet spoilers.* The empire which, by the rapid victories of Alexander the Great, was erected in a few years upon the ruins of the Persian, is represented by the leopard, an animal remarkable for its swiftness. The fourth beast is known by the description to denote the empire of the Romans. But it has no particular name, because there is no animal that corresponds to the greatness, the strength, and the extent of the Roman empire. The fourth beast, as it is explained to the prophet, is a fourth kingdom, "diverse from all kingdoms," being not governed by a king, like the three former empires; but a republic, where the supreme power was vested in a senate and assembly. It "shall devour the whole earth, and break it in pieces," because the Romans subdued many parts of Europe and Africa, which were not conquered by Alexander, not being known to him; and although gentle, according to their principle, to those who submitted, brought the ravages of war upon those who opposed their power. The beast had ten horns, which are explained to the prophet to be "ten kings that should arise" out of the fourth kingdom. The barbarous nations, with whom the Romans had intercourse, being invited, by the different parties who contended at Rome for the government of the state, to assist them in their struggle, became acquainted both with the wealth and with the corruption of the Roman empire. They made incursions, obtained settlements, and established different kingdoms within the empire; and the number of independent kingdoms, which arose out of the empire, has been computed, by the most accurate examiners, to be ten. Now, as the prophet had seen among the ten horns of the beast "another little horn, before whom were three of the first horns plucked up," so it is explained to him, that, after the ten kings had arisen out of the fourth kingdom, *i. e.* after the Roman empire had been split into ten kingdoms, "there shall arise another king, diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three" of the ten "kings." This, by the place which it holds in the description, can be none other than the power of the pope, which grew through a course of ages, so that from being a servant of the lowly Jesus, the successor of his humble apostles, he became a temporal prince, possessed of a large territory, and claiming to be the head of the whole Christian church. He was "diverse from the first," because his was a spiritual, as well as a civil power. The distinction was not always accurately marked between those claims which he advanced as the bishop of Rome, and those which he advanced as a temporal prince; and the one assisted the other.

* Isaiah xxi. 2.

Before the end of the eighth century, the popes had by different means obtained three of the kingdoms into which the Roman empire was split, as an emblem of which they continue to this day to wear a triple crown. The little horn did then "subdue three kings." It is said also that, he had "a look more stout than his fellows, a mouth that spake very great things, and that he shall speak great words against the Most High." This he did by calling himself infallible, interpreting Scripture according to his pleasure, requiring instant obedience to his decrees in opposition to the plain sense of Scripture. It is said, "he shall make war with the saints, and prevail against them, and wear out the saints of the Most High." This he did by the court of inquisition, by the wars which he excited against Protestants, and by the various bloody methods which he employed to oppress those who resisted his usurpation. It is said "he shall think to change times and laws." This he did by indulgences, by traditions, by new modes of worship, new articles of faith, and new practices, as penances, fasts, and pilgrimages. The prophecy concludes with foretelling the destruction of this strange power, and the triumph of the saints of the Most High over their oppressor: and it even sets a season for that event.

In this passage of Daniel, then, and there are others in this book of the same import, it is plainly foretold, that there was to arise a power of a very singular character in opposition to true religion; that this power was to arise in that part of the world which was properly called the Roman empire, and that it was to arise after the empire was divided into ten kingdoms.

The other inspired person, who speaks of this power, is John the Divine. In his epistles the expressions are general. 1 John ii. 18, "Ye have heard that antichrist shall come;" antichrist, *i. e.* a person, or a succession of persons, in opposition to Christ, to his dignity, to his doctrine, and to the spirit of his religion. "Ye have heard it." It is one of the traditions of the Christian church, proceeding from the first preachers of Christianity, and diffused with the knowledge of the Gospel through the whole world. 1 John iv. 3, "This is that spirit of antichrist whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already it is in the world." The spirit of this opposition is already working, although the time of its full manifestation is what you have been taught to look for as yet future.

Both these passages are general, and only furnish a name for that corrupt usurping power, which Daniel had described. But John is most particular in his book of prophecy. When he was in the spirit in the isle of Patmos, he "saw the things which shall be hereafter;" and amongst other things there were shown to him, Rev. xvii. the future corruptions of religion, by the vision of a woman sitting upon a portentous beast, having seven heads and ten horns." Here, as in Daniel, the vision is explained. For when John "wondered with great admiration" at what he saw, the angel told him "the mystery," *i. e.* the hidden import "of the woman and of the beast. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth. The woman is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth. And the ten horns are ten kings which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. For God hath put it in their heart to

fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled." Here we are brought back to the prophecy of Daniel; for the city of seven hills which reigneth over the kings of the earth, is the characteristical description of Rome. She was the mistress of the world; and the peculiarity of her situation, which her own poets, and all travellers mark, is, that within one wall she enclosed seven hills or eminences.

Septemque una sibi muro circumdabit arces. The universal empire which she attained under the first of her emperors was, in succeeding ages, split into ten kingdoms, so that she is fitly marked by the beast with seven heads and ten horns. In the character which John draws of the woman, we recognise the features of that king, diverse from all other kings, who was represented in Daniel by the little horn. She has a cup in her hand, with which she teaches the nations to commit idolatry. She is "drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." She receives power from the ten kings, and she rides them, *i. e.* directs them at her pleasure. Here is an antichristian power, and the time and the place of it are marked. It is to exist along with the ten kings, receiving its kingdom from them; and, at length, when they are tired of its usurpation, to be destroyed by them. It is the city of Rome, described in words, which to any person acquainted with history, can mark no other city in the world, the capital of that empire, out of the division of which the strange power was to arise. The later prophecy then, according to the practice in the chain of prophecy upon all other subjects, has rendered the ancient more intelligible, and more pointed; and when we compare Daniel and John together, we can entertain no doubt that the seat of the antichristian power, which both agree in describing, was to be the city of Rome, after the division of the Roman empire.

So far Daniel and John. Now here comes in the Apostle Paul between the two, manifestly describing the same antichristian power of which they speak; a power which "opposeth, and exalteth itself above all that is called God, and sheweth itself that it is God." His description is, in some respects, not so intelligible as theirs. We should not be able to learn from him either the time or the place of the appearance of this power. But we find him referring, for the explication of the short expressions which are here used, to what he had said when he was at Thessalonica, and to the knowledge of the subject which was generally diffused through the Christian church. "Remember ye not that I have told you these things. Ye know what withholdeth." We are warranted then, we are obliged by the authority of the apostle himself, to take in this general knowledge as the commentary upon his words, *i. e.* we are obliged to make the prophecy of Daniel, and the information of which John says Christians were in possession, and which his prophecy extended, to make them the interpreters of Paul; and when we do so, the meaning of this apostle appears plain.

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians when the Roman empire existed in all its glory, during the reign of some of the first emperors, and before any disaster had befallen the state, or any inroad had been made by the barbarians. But this flourishing condition of the

empire withheld the man of sin from being revealed. He could not be revealed, while the empire was one and undivided; for the prophecy of Daniel had expressly marked, that antichrist was to arise after the dismemberment of the empire; and the prophecy of John says, that he was to exist with the ten kings. It was many ages after the date of this epistle, that independent kingdoms were established in the empire; and it was not till the fifth century that Rome was taken, and the Roman empire destroyed by the barbarians. Then "he who letteth," ὁ κατεχων, "was taken out of the way." The power and dignity of the emperor being abolished, the bishop of Rome became the most conspicuous person in the western world. Availing himself of all the advantages which the weakness, the divisions, and the continual wars of the barbarous princes afforded him, he silently reared his head, extended his claims, enlarged his dominions; and before the end of the eighth century, was in possession of the territory of three of the ten kings, was acknowledged as a sovereign prince, and was submitted to as the vicar of Christ.

This interpretation of the obscure expression of Paul, which we derive easily from the words of the two other prophets, contains a satisfying reason why he wrote thus darkly. There would have been a great impropriety in a dutiful subject of the empire, as the apostle always professed to be, speaking openly in a letter which was to be circulated through the Christian world, of the dissolution of the empire, and of events respecting the Christians, which were to happen after that dissolution. Such a letter would justly have been accounted treason against the state, and might have exposed both the writer of it, and those who held it in veneration, to civil punishment. The apostle, therefore, darkly refers to what he had said at Thessalonica, and by this cautious mode of expressing himself avoids an unnecessary danger. But although he does not here explain what he had said, the knowledge of it was carried from Thessalonica, or from other churches where he had given the same instruction, through all the Christian world, and as the intimation agreed exactly with the prediction of Daniel, it came to be generally understood by the Christians, that as soon as the Roman empire was dismembered antichrist should appear. "Therefore," says Tertullian in his apology, written in the second century, "we Christians are under a particular necessity of praying for the emperors, and for the continued state of the empire, because we know the dreadful power which hangs over the whole world; and the conclusion of the age, which threatens the most horrible evils, is retarded by the continuance of the time appointed for the Roman empire. We pray, therefore, that this evil may be deferred by the perpetuity of the state." Jerome, who lived to see Rome taken by the Goths, exclaims, "He which letteth is now taken away, and from hence we understand that antichrist is near."

Although the revelation of the man of sin was in this manner delayed, or letteth, for ages after the apostle wrote, yet the seeds of this corruption were sown in the Christian church even during his days; for he says, *το μυστηριον ήδη ενεργεiat της ανομίας*. Mystery is the Scripture name for any thing that is secret, whose nature is not perfectly discovered. The gospel is called "the mystery of godliness," because its divine and spiritual nature was unknown to the world at

the time of its publication ; and the corruptions of the gospel are called “ the mystery of iniquity,” because they long worked secretly, before their influence in encouraging iniquity was manifest. We find many traces of them in the apostolical writings ; contentions for pre-eminence ; the abuse of Christian liberty so as to make it a pretext for vindicating rebellion and a contempt of the higher powers ; false philosophy perverting the simplicity of the truth ; the distinction of meats ; the worship of angels ; the observance of days and months, and other superstitious ceremonies ; voluntary humility ; affected mortification ; abstinence from things, “ which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving ;” a respect for the traditions and doctrines of men ; and an endeavour to substitute outward compliance with the commandments, in place of that “ righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, which is the kingdom of Christ.” All this is popery. Under whatever name, or in whatever form it appears, it is the spirit of the “ man of sin.” The apostles testify against it in their epistles ; and by the very strong censures with which they brand the first fruits of this spirit, they teach Christians to hold it in abhorrence wheresoever it makes itself manifest. So long as the Roman emperors were heathen, and the Christians were exposed to persecution under their government, this spirit was repressed, and could not do much mischief. But after the conversion of Constantine lent the aid of the civil magistrate to the decrees of the church, this spirit became conspicuous in the articles of faith, which were established by authority, and enforced upon the Christian world. The worship of saints and angels, many superstitious customs, and much foolish abstinence, became the law of the church ; and this law was esteemed as of equal authority with the word of God. Still, however, the dignity and power of the Roman emperor restrained the complete manifestation of the “ man of sin.” But when a barbarous race invaded the seat of the Roman empire, levelled all that was held venerable in the state, and spread ignorance and anarchy over those lands which had been blessed with science and equal government, then was the opportunity of the “ man of sin,” *τῷ ἑαυτοῦ καιρῷ*, his occasion, his favourable time ; when meeting with no obstacle, and finding in the weakness, the divisions, and the brutality of the barbarous princes, a subject upon which his arts might be practised with success, “ he, as God, seated himself in the temple of God, showing himself” to his deluded followers, “ that he is God.” The power which had been occasionally exercised by the general councils, under the protection of the emperors, and with a prudent regard to circumstances, was then boldly asserted as the right of the Bishop of Rome. By his own infallibility he declared what should be the faith of Christians ; he enacted the discipline and ceremonies of the church ; and he separated from Christ, and persecuted with the sword, those who refused to submit to his decrees. With strict propriety the apostle calls him, in the 8th verse, *ὁ ἀνόμος*, the lawless one ; since it is said of him by those, who, in their public writings, profess to give a true picture of the extent of his authority, that he is subject to no law, that by the plenitude of his power, he can make right wrong, and wrong right, and that he may do all things above law, without law, and against law. A time of anarchy was the season, *καιρὸς*, for the revelation of such a

man; and the progress of just notions with regard to the rights of sovereigns and the liberties of mankind must, in the nature of things, circumscribe such extravagant claims.

But before we speak of his destruction, let us attend to the intimation given in this prophecy of the acts, by which this "mystery of iniquity" was to be established. The apostle mentions two; false miracles, or "all power, and signs, and lying wonders;" and what he calls "all deceivableness of unrighteousness." One of the marks, by which the church of Rome says it may be known that she is the true church, is the power of working miracles. Accordingly, the legends of the church are filled with wonderful cures performed at the shrines of the saints or by their bones and relics; and with stories more marvellous and more ridiculous, than any of those which we now read for amusement. In a superstitious and ignorant age, when it was the interest of the priests to deceive the people, and when it was the wish of the people to be deceived, exploits which appear to us palpable and gross forgeries were received without examination as real and great miracles. Indeed, in most of the instances, the forgery was so gross, that it has been acknowledged by several writers in the Romish church; and it does not seem necessary to suppose that the power of any evil spirit was exerted. But these lying wonders are here said to have been wrought κατ' ἐνεργειαν τοῦ Σατανα, because Satan is the Father of lies; and their influence upon the minds of men in preparing them to receive and to retain the corruptions of the truth, was an instrument in which he delighted, by which he had held a part of the dominion which he exercised over the heathen world, and by which, after the appearance of Christianity, he kept many of the followers of Christ in nearly the same darkness, idolatry, and slavery, which formed the character of those to whom the true God had never been preached. The other instrument of establishing the usurped authority of the "man of sin" is styled παση ἀπατῇ τῆς ἀδικίας: an expression which comprehends all the false doctrines, and delusive promises, and groundless fears, by which the church of Rome rules over the minds of its votaries; the forgeries of books; the perversion of Scripture; the arts of captious reasoning; the expectation of purgatory, that invisible fire which may be rendered longer or shorter, more intense or more gentle, according to the pleasure of the Pope; that reliance upon the intercession of the saints, and upon the powers of indulgence and absolution said to be vested in the church of Rome, by which men are accommodated in the practice of iniquity, and relieved from the reproaches of conscience.

The effectual preservative against the influence of both these instruments is the "love of truth." An acquaintance with the nature and evidence of the miracles of the Gospel exposes the falsehood of the lying wonders of the church of Rome; and "the truth as it is in Jesus," detained in faith and love, guards us against "all the deceivableness of unrighteousness." But, if men will not exercise their own understandings, they may be led into dangerous errors, and may, finally, fall into that condemnation from which the holding the truth would have delivered them. The apostle, however, is not to be understood as meaning, by the strong expressions which he has subjoined to this prophecy, that all who ever believed the errors of

popery are certainly damned. So uncharitable a sentiment forms no part of the Protestant faith. We believe that many worthy, pious men, by the prejudices of education, and custom, have been so confirmed in doctrines, which we know to be erroneous, that they were unable to extricate themselves. Yet they might be preserved by the grace of God from that unrighteousness, to which the same errors led many others; and there might be in their breasts a "love of truth," although the thickness of the surrounding cloud kept them in darkness. The condemnation is pronounced against those, who "received not the love of the truth that they might be saved," who greedily embraced error, who cherished it because it encouraged them in sin, and were led by means of it, to a security and an excess of transgression. Whether such were the teachers or the hearers of this corrupt form of Christianity, their condemnation is just; for although the guilt of those who lead others into sin is most heinous, yet no man is entitled to plead his being misled, as an excuse for the perversion of his understanding, or the corruption of his life. "For every man shall bear his own burden."

"The love of truth" is the preservative against the usurped dominion of the "man of sin," and the diffusion of the knowledge of the truth will prove the destruction of that dominion. For as the prophecies of the great apostasy, in Daniel and John, speak clearly of better times, when truth and righteousness shall flourish upon earth; so the apostle says, "Then shall that wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." "The spirit or breath of his mouth" is a common Scripture expression for the word of God. The church of Rome forbade the people to read the Scriptures; and it was the ignorance produced by this prohibition that kept the world in bondage. But when our forefathers presumed, at the time of the Reformation, to open the Bible; when it was translated into the languages of all countries, and was everywhere read and explained, it shook the pillars of the dominion of "the man of sin." Many parts of the Christian world were soon emancipated from subjection to him. The temporal power which he had assumed over Christian princes and states was almost everywhere resisted; and even in those countries which still acknowledge him as the head of the Christian church, his spiritual pretensions are abated, and he is no longer the object of servile dread. And we are thus prepared for believing what the apostle declares, that the Lord, by the brightness of his coming, by some striking interposition of Providence, or by the instrumentality of men, shall refine his church from this corruption, and leave no portion of the dross. The times are in his hand. We presume not to say, when it shall be, or what are the steps by which it is to be accomplished. But we wait with faith and hope for that clear explication of the obscurest words of the prophecy, which the event will give to some age of the Christian church; and we regard the diminution of both the temporal and the spiritual authority of the Pope, the progress of the Reformation, and the emancipation of many states which he once held in subjection, as pledges that all the parts of the prophecy will, in their season, be accomplished.

Barrow. Mede. Warburton. Newton. Hurd. Halifax. Bagot. Macknight on the Epistles.

SECTION I.

EPISCOPACY AND PRESBYTERY.

THE jurisdiction and supremacy of the Pope never was acknowledged by what is called the Eastern or Greek church, *i. e.* by large bodies of Christians inhabiting the Eastern part of Europe, and a great part of Asia, or by those Christians that are found in some districts of Africa; and the era of the Reformation separated a considerable part of what had been called the Latin or Western church from the communion of the bishop of Rome. But the Protestants, although they united in combating that description of church government, which is given either by the Papists or by the Roman Catholics, did not agree as to what was to be substituted in its place. Minuter shades of difference in the external polity and visible form of Protestant churches may be overlooked. But there are two general systems of church government that obtain amongst Protestants, which are, in many respects, opposed to one another. We are accustomed to express the points of difference in one word, by calling some Protestant churches Episcopal, and others Presbyterian; and these two systems form an interesting object in Great Britain, because the one is established by law in England, the other in Scotland.

The Episcopal form of church government professes to find in the days of the apostles the model upon which it is framed. While our Lord remained upon earth, he acted as the immediate governor of his church. Having himself called the apostles, he kept them constantly about his person, except at one time, when he sent them forth upon a short progress through the cities of Judea, and gave them particular directions how they should conduct themselves. The seventy disciples, whom he sent forth at another time, are never mentioned again in the New Testament. But the apostles received from him many intimations that their office was to continue after his departure; and as one great object of his ministry was to qualify them for the execution of this office, so in the interval between his resurrection and his ascension, he explained to them the duties of it, and he invested them with the authority which the discharge of those duties implied. "Go," said he, "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, teaching them; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost."*

Soon after the ascension of Jesus, his apostles received those extraordinary gifts of which his promise had given them assurance; and immediately they began to execute their commission, not only as the witnesses of his resurrection, and the teachers of his religion, but as the rulers of that society which was gathered by their preaching. In Acts vi. we find the apostles ordering the Christians at Jerusalem to

* Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. John xx. 21, 22.

“look out seven men of honest report,” who might take charge of the daily ministrations to the poor, and to bring the men so chosen to them, that “we,” said the apostles, “may appoint them over this business.” The men accordingly were “set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them.” Here are the apostles ordaining deacons. Afterwards we find Paul, in his progress through Asia Minor, ordaining in every church elders, *πρεσβυτε-
ρους*; the name properly expressive of age being transferred, after the practice of the Jews, as a mark of respect to ecclesiastical rulers.* The men thus ordained by Paul appear from the book of Acts and the Epistles to have been teachers, pastors, overseers of the flock of Christ; and to Timothy, who was a minister of the word, Paul speaks of “the gift which is in thee by the putting on of my hands.”† Over the persons to whom he thus conveyed the office of teaching he exercised jurisdiction; for he sent to Ephesus, to the elders of the church to meet him at Miletus, and there in a long discourse gave them a solemn charge;‡ and to Timothy and Titus he wrote epistles in the style of a superior.

As Paul unquestionably conceived that there belonged to him as an apostle an authority over other office-bearers of the church, so his Epistles contain two examples of a delegation of that authority. He not only directs Timothy, whom he had besought to abide at Ephesus, how to behave himself in the house of God as a minister, but he sets him over other ministers. He empowers him to ordain men to the work of the ministry. 2 Tim. ii. 2. “The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” He gives them directions about the ordination of bishops and deacons: he places both these kinds of office-bearers in Ephesus under his inspection, instructing him in what manner to receive an accusation against an elder who laboured in word and doctrine; and he commands him to charge some that they teach no other doctrine but the form of sound words. In like manner, he says to Titus, i. 5, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that were wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.” He describes to Titus the qualifications of a bishop or elder, making him the judge how far any person in Crete was possessed of these qualifications: he gives him authority over all orders of Christians there, and he empowers him to reject heretics.

Here, then, is that apostle, with whose actions we are best acquainted, seemingly aware that there would be continual occasion in the Christian church for the exercise of that authority over pastors and teachers, which the apostles had derived from the Lord Jesus; and by these two examples of a delegation given during his lifetime, preparing the world for beholding that authority exercised by the successors of the apostles in all ages.

Accordingly the earliest Christian writers tell us that the apostles to prevent contention, appointed bishops and deacons; giving orders too, that upon their death, other approved men should succeed in their ministry. We are told that the other apostles constituted their first

* Acts xiv. 23.

† 2 Tim. i. 6.

‡ Acts xx. 17—35.

fruits, *i. e.* their first disciples, after they had proved them by the Spirit, bishops and deacons of those who were to believe; and that the apostle John, who survived the rest, after returning from Patmos, the place of his banishment, went about the neighbouring nations, ordaining bishops, establishing whole churches, and setting apart particular persons for the ministry, as they were pointed out to him by the Spirit. As bishops are mentioned in the earliest times, so ecclesiastical history records the succession of bishops through many ages: and even during the first three centuries, before Christianity was incorporated with the state, every city, where the multitude of Christians required a number of pastors to perform the stated offices, presents to us, as far as we can gather from contemporary writers, an appearance very much the same with that of the church of Jerusalem in the days of the apostles. The apostle James seems to have resided in that city. But there is also mention of the elders of the church, who, according to the Scripture representation of elders, must have discharged the ministerial office, but over whom the apostle James presided. So in Carthage, where Cyprian was bishop, and in every other Christian city of which we have particular accounts, there was a college of presbyters; and there was one person who had not only precedency, but jurisdiction and authority over the rest. They were his council in matters relating to the church, and they were qualified to preach, to baptize, and to administer the Lord's supper; but they could do nothing without his permission and authority. It is a principle in Christian antiquity, *ἓς ἐπίσκοπος, μία ἐκκλησία*. The one bishop had the care of all the Christians, who, although they met in separate congregations, constituted one church; and he had the inspection of the pastors, who, having received ordination from the bishop, officiated in the separate congregations, performed the several parts of duty which he prescribed to them, and were accountable to him for their conduct.

In continuation of this primitive institution we find episcopacy in all concerns of the church of Christ. Until the time of the Reformation there were in every Christian states persons with the name, the rank, and the authority of bishops; and the existence of such persons was not considered as an innovation, but as an establishment, which, by means of catalogues preserved in ecclesiastical writers, may be traced back to the days of the apostles.

Upon the principles which have now been stated it is understood, according to the Episcopal form of government, that there is in the church a superior order of office-bearers, the successors of the apostles, who possess in their own persons the right of ordination and jurisdiction, and who are called *ἐπίσκοποι*, as being the overseers not only of the people, but also of the clergy; and an inferior order of ministers, called presbyters, the literal translation of the word *πρεσβύτεροι*, which is rendered in our English Bibles elders, persons who receive, from the ordination of the bishop, power to preach and to administer the sacraments, who are set over the people, but are themselves under the government of the bishop, and have no right to convey to others the sacred office, which he gives them authority to exercise under him. According to a phrase used by Charles I., who was by no means an unlearned defender of that form of government to which

he was a martyr, the presbyters are *episcopi gregis* ; but the bishops are *episcopi gregis et pastorum*.

In what manner bishops of a province or nation are associated amongst themselves, and what degree of subordination subsists between them and their metropolitans or archbishops, is generally understood to be a matter of civil regulation, depending upon mutual agreement, or upon national establishment. But the authority of a bishop within his own diocese, the word employed to denote the extent of territory committed to his care, his jurisdiction over all the Christians that live in it, and his superintendence of the clergy that officiate there, is conceived to be a right conveyed to him by succession from the apostles, in the exercise of which he may be supported by the civil magistrate, but which is itself founded upon the word of God, and is agreeable to the ancient and uninterrupted practice of the Christian church.

The Presbyterian form of church government professes, like the Episcopal, to find, in the times of the apostles, the model upon which it is framed.

In order to perceive how two opposite forms can claim to be derived from the same origin, the point at which they separate must be carefully marked. Both Episcopalians and Presbyterians agree, that amongst the various powers committed to the apostles there was an authority vested in them, as the governors of the church, to exercise the most ample inspection and jurisdiction over those whom they ordained, as well as over the Christian people: and both agree that there are instances in Scripture of a delegation of some part at least of this governing power. But they differ as to the description of the persons to whom the delegation was made. Timothy and Titus, who, by the directions contained in the Epistles addressed to them, were unquestionably constituted *Episcopi et pastorum et gregis*, are accounted by the Episcopalians, the stated bishops of Ephesus and Crete, office-bearers of the same order with the succession of bishops in other ages.

According to the Presbyterians, Timothy and Titus were extraordinary office-bearers suited to the infant state of the Christian church, who are called in the New Testament evangelists, and whose office is thus described in the fourth century by Eusebius. "They, laying only the foundation of the faith in places which had not heard the Gospel, and appointing other pastors to whom they delivered the cultivation of these new plants, passed on themselves to other countries and nations."

The proof that Timothy and Titus were of the order of evangelists is of this kind. Timothy is mentioned in the Acts and the Epistles as an attendant of Paul in his different journeys. Paul says, 1 Tim. i. 3, that he had besought him to abide still at Ephesus, which implies that this was not his fixed station, where a sense of duty called him to reside, but a place, where the prospect of his doing some special service rendered a temporary stay expedient. In 2 Tim. iv. 5, Timothy is called an evangelist, *εὐαγγελιστὴν ποιῆσον*. Paul appoints him, 2 Tim. iv. 9, 21, to come to him at Rome, from whence the second Epistle was written, and to come before winter; which implies that

he was not soon to return to Ephesus. From these circumstances it appears probable, that, although in the postscript of the second Epistle, which, being no part of the canon of Scripture, is of no authority, Timothy is styled the first Bishop of the church of the Ephesians, and although those who have made catalogues of bishops, begin the succession at Ephesus with this respectable name, yet Timothy was not a stated office-bearer in that church; but a person whom Paul, from intimate acquaintance with his zeal and his talents, sent to Ephesus, where he himself had resided two years, and had ordained elders. This is rendered the more probable by our being able to explain the circumstances, which made it proper to send such a person as Timothy with an extraordinary character to Ephesus. In the solemn charge which Paul addressed to the elders of that church, when he summoned them to meet him at Miletus, there are these words, Acts xx. 29, 30; "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch." As this warning suggests that there might be much expediency in sending an extraordinary teacher to Ephesus, so we are told by some ancient Christian writers, that Timothy was left at Ephesus in order to oppose Judaizing teachers; and many parts of the Epistles show, that the arts of the false teachers at Ephesus had seduced some, and that the nature of their teaching implied such a display of learning, and such a perversion of Christian doctrine, as required an able and skilful antagonist.

Titus is styled, in the postscript of the epistle addressed to him, Bishop of the church of Cretians. But the postscripts of the epistles are known to be of no authority, being the additions of a later age; and it appears from two circumstances, that Titus was an evangelist, and not, as the postscript bears, Bishop of the church of the Cretians, or a stated office-bearer in that church. 1. From the account given of his being left there. Titus i. 5. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city;" which, according to the description that we find in Eusebius, is the very work of an evangelist. 2. From a direction given him, Titus iii. 12. "When I shall send Artemas unto thee, or Tychicus, be diligent to come unto me to Nicopolis: for I have determined there to winter." Nicopolis was a town in Macedonia, or in Epirus. Whichever of the two we understand it to be, Titus had to sail from Crete the whole length of the *Mare Aegeum*, in those days a very difficult navigation, before he could reach the apostle. The direction, therefore, seems to imply that the work assigned him in the first chapter was temporary. When it was finished, he was to rejoin the apostle, that he might be sent elsewhere; and, accordingly, in the second epistle to Timothy, which is generally understood to be one of the last of Paul's epistles, and was certainly written after Titus had left Crete, it is said "Titus is departed unto Dalmatia."

If these are arguments sufficient to prove that Timothy and Titus were extraordinary office-bearers, suited to the infant state of the Christian church, then these two instances, of a delegation of the

apostolical powers of inspection and government, are no proof that such delegation to single persons ought to be continued, or that the apostles intended it should remain in the Christian church. But, if the support which the episcopal form of government derives from the powers committed to Timothy and Titus be withdrawn, the Presbyterians contend, that the Scriptures furnish no unequivocal instance of inspection over pastors being exercised by any office-bearer inferior to an apostle; and they think they are able to prove that the distinction between bishops and presbyters has no foundation in Scripture. Even after they prove this point, they have still to combat the arguments, which the Episcopalians derive from the universal establishment of Episcopacy, and from the succession of bishops since the days of the apostles. These, however, are matters of secondary consideration. The first thing incumbent upon those, who contend that Episcopal government does not come to us recommended by apostolical authority, is to show, that presbyters are in the New Testament put upon a level with bishops, and are there invested with those powers of ordination and jurisdiction, which, according to the Episcopal form of government, belong exclusively to the higher order of office-bearers. The amount of the reasoning of the Presbyterians upon this fundamental point may be thus stated.

They begin their argument with distinguishing carefully between those extraordinary powers, which exalt the apostles of Jesus above all other office-bearers in his church, and those ordinary functions implied in their office as teachers, which are in all ages necessary for the edification of the body of Christ. The universal commission, which they received from their Master, to make disciples of all nations, could not be permanent as to the extent of it, because it was their practice to ordain elders in every city, and because the course of human affairs required that, after Christianity was established, the teachers of it should officiate in a particular place. The infallible guidance of the Spirit, under which the apostles acted in the execution of their universal commission, was not promised, in the same measure, to succeeding teachers. But being, in their case, vouched by the power of working miracles, it directed the Christians of their days to submit implicitly to their injunctions and directions; it placed their words upon a footing with the words of their Master; and it warrants the Christian world, in all ages, to receive with entire confidence that system of faith and morality, which they were authorised to deliver in his name. But, as all Protestants hold that this system was completed when the canon of Scripture was closed, and that neither individuals, nor any body of men, have authority to add any new articles of faith, it is admitted by them that a great part of the apostolical powers ceased with those to whom Jesus first committed them: and, therefore, the Presbyterians cannot appear to contradict the analogy of faith, when they rank amongst the extraordinary powers, which were to cease after the days of the apostles, that supreme right of inspection and government over Christian pastors, which was implied in their universal commission, and in their hands was not liable to abuse. Amongst the ordinary functions belonging to their office as teachers, which were to remain always in the Christian church, are to be ranked, not only preaching the word and dis-

pensing the sacraments, but also that rule and government over Christians as such, which is implied in the idea of the church as a society; and the Presbyterians contend, that the right of exercising all these ordinary functions was conveyed by the apostles to *πρεσβυτεροι*, whom they ordained. In order to prove that none of those ordinary functions were reserved, as the distinguishing privilege of a higher class of office-bearers, but that the Presbyters derived, from the ordination of the apostles, a right to govern the church as well as to preach and to dispense the sacraments, the Presbyterians are accustomed to dwell upon this incontrovertible proposition, that the two names *επισκοποι* and *πρεσβυτεροι* are used by the apostles promiscuously; from whence this inference seems clearly to follow, that a distinction between *επισκοποι* and *πρεσβυτεροι*, as if they denoted different classes of office-bearers, is a distinction unknown to the New Testament. When the apostle Paul sent for the elders of Ephesus to meet him at Miletus, although they are called *τους πρεσβυτερους της εκκλησιας*, he thus addresses them, Acts xx. 28, *προσεχετε ουν εαυτοις, και παντι τω ποιμνι, εν ω ἡμας το πνευμα του ἁγιου εθετο επισκοπους, ποιμαίνειν την εκκλησιαν του Θεου*. Here the *πρεσβυτεροι* are called *επισκοποι*, and are addressed as having the government of the church. Paul says to Titus, “I left thee in Crete *ἵνα καταστησῃς κατα πολιν πρεσβυτερους*.” He mentions some qualifications which ought to be required in them; and he adds as a reason for requiring such qualifications, *δει γαρ τον επισκοπον ανεγκλητον ειναι*; intimating that the two names were convertible. The epistle to the Philippians is addressed *πασι τοις ἁγιοις εν Χριστῳ Ἰησουν, τοις οἱσιν εν Φιλιπποις, συν επισκοποις και διακονοις*: the natural interpretation of which is, that these *επισκοποι* resided at Philippi in connexion with the Christians of that church; and that as there is no mention of *πρεσβυτεροι* in the address, the same persons whom the writers of the New Testament, in speaking of other churches, call *πρεσβυτεροι*, are here termed *επισκοποι*. Lastly, as *πρεσβυτεροι* are thus called *επισκοποι*, so the apostles, the highest office-bearers in the church, did not think it beneath them to take the name *πρεσβυτεροι*. John begins his second and third epistles with the words *ὁ πρεσβυτερος*,—and Peter thus writes to the Christians whom he addresses, 1 Pet. v. 1; “The elders which are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory.” Here are powers of government committed to *πρεσβυτεροι*. The apostle, by calling himself *συμπρεσβυτερος*, seems to intimate that they possessed all the authority in the Christian church, which was to remain after the death of the apostles; and the introduction of the *αρχιποιμην* appears inconsistent with the idea of the *πρεσβυτεροι* being accountable to any individual teacher, after the apostles ceased to represent the authority of the chief Shepherd upon earth.

The Presbyterians say further, that it may be gathered from the New Testament, that *πρεσβυτεροι*, having received, by ordination from the apostles, the right of governing the church, had also the right of conveying to others, by ordination, all the powers with which they had been invested. This appears, in the first place, because they are not prohibited from so doing. For since it was the intention of Christ, that there should be a succession of office-bearers having rule in his

church, and since the natural method of continuing this succession is through those who have been themselves invested with the character, nothing less than an express inhibition can satisfy us that the *πρεσβυτεροι*, the first office-bearers whom the apostles ordained, were restrained from ordaining others. But there neither is any such inhibition, nor is it possible there can be; because the names *επισκοποι* and *πρεσβυτεροι*, being used in the New Testament promiscuously, even although there were any passages, as there are none, investing *επισκοποι* with the right of ordination, still we could not be sure that those, who in other places are called *πρεσβυτεροι*, were not included under this name. But, in the second place, that *πρεσβυτεροι* were not excluded from the right of ordination, is made manifest by what the apostle says of Timothy. For, as if to show that the office of *πρεσβυτεροι* was not degraded by the temporary authority, which we understand to have been conveyed to this extraordinary officer, we are told that they had a part in his ordination. The apostle indeed speaks, 2 Tim. i. 6, of *χαρισμα του Θεου, ο εστιν εν σοι δια της επιθεσεως των χειρων μου*. But he speaks, 1 Tim. iv. 14, of the same *χαρισμα, ο εδοθη σοι δια προφητειας, μετα επιθεσεως των χειρων του πρεσβυτεριου*. So that the apostle, who had ordained many elders before he met with Timothy, appears to have called their assistance in the ordination of this person; which may be regarded as an apostolical acknowledgment of what we found to be implied in the nature of their office, that they have a right to ordain.

Although this train of reasoning, employed by the Presbyterians, should be understood to prove that the distinction between the order of bishops and the order of presbyters, which is the foundation of the Episcopal form of government, is unknown to the New Testament, yet if it could be shown that this distinction has obtained in the Christian church ever since the days of the apostles, it might appear to derive, from this early and uniform practice, a sanction nearly equivalent to the express appointment of Scripture. For it might be argued, that although the apostles had not unequivocally declared this distinction in their writings, the fact unquestionably proved that they had established it in the churches which they planted, and that from those who had the best opportunity of knowing their minds, there was diffused an universal impression that they intended it should be continual. In this manner, the Episcopal form of government would seem to stand nearly upon the same ground with the consecration of the Lord's day. There is no commandment in the New Testament appointing the change of the Sabbath, from the seventh day of the week to the first; and the instances of the apostles meeting for public worship, upon the first day, recorded in the New Testament, are not of themselves sufficient to prove that they had laid aside the practice of attending public worship, as our Lord did, on the seventh day; or that they meant the first day to be always kept holy. But when we conjoin with those instances, the primitive, universal, and uninterrupted practice of the Christian world; when we gather from the first Christian writers, from heathens, and from every kind of authentic evidence, that the disciples of Jesus everywhere agreed in the observance of the Lord's day, amidst their differences upon almost every other point, we cannot doubt that the change was made by an

authority which all Christians recognised. Episcopal writers are accustomed, in the course of their argument, to refer to this as a parallel case; and affirming that there is the same evidence of an apostolical appointment, in the distinction between bishops and presbyters, as in the change of the Sabbath, they conclude that the alleged ambiguity in those passages of Scripture, where they think this distinction may be found, is completely removed, when we interpret them in the legitimate manner, by the practice of the Christian church ever since those passages were written.

This mode of arguing is very plausible; but when thoroughly canvassed, it affords a more uncertain support to the apostolical institution of Episcopacy than it seems at first sight to give.—You will be sensible of this, by attending to the three following circumstances.

1. There is no authentic catalogue of the names of those who were bishops, for many of the ages immediately following the days of the apostles. The persecution to which the early Christians were exposed, the smallness of their numbers in many of the places where they assembled, and the secrecy with which they were obliged to hold their meetings, did not admit of records regularly kept, and transmitted in a state of preservation to distant ages. Of the succession in many churches, during the first and second centuries, we know nothing: and even with regard to those, which, either from their being mentioned in Scripture, or from the celebrity of the cities where they were planted, make a conspicuous figure in ecclesiastical history, there is the greatest intricacy, and contradiction, and doubtful conjecture in the attempts to ascertain the succession of their teachers. These attempts could not be conducted with much probability of success, till after Christianity became the established religion of the empire. We meet with an example in the ecclesiastical history of Eusebius. He was bishop of Cesarea, and a man of great influence at the court of Constantine. Yet even with all his solicitude to discover the truth, and all the means of information which he had it in his power to command, he begins his catalogue with declaring, that “it is not easy to say who were the disciples of the apostles, that were appointed to feed the churches which they planted, excepting only those whom we may learn from the writings of Paul.”* It is manifest, that an argument founded upon the uninterrupted succession from the days of the apostles is very much weakened, when, upon tracing back this succession, we find an unavoidable, and an acknowledged uncertainty, at the very time when it is of most importance to the argument to know exactly what was done.

2. This deficiency of catalogues cannot be supplied by the manner in which ancient writers speak of what the apostles did. Although the names were lost, there might be so clear a description of the powers of the different offices, as would decide the controversy. But this is far from being the case. The same ambiguity in the meaning of the word bishop, which we remark in Scripture, pervades the testimony which the earliest Christian writers bear to the establishment of Episcopacy. Thus when Clemens, one of the apostolical fathers, who wrote in the first century an epistle to the Corinthians, says in a

* Hist. Eccles. iii. 4.

passage already referred to, "the apostles preached through cities and countries, appointing their first disciples, after having proved them by the Spirit, to be *ἐπισκοποὺς καὶ διακονοὺς τῶν μέλλοντων πιστεῦειν*, and left them directions that, after their death, other approved men should succeed in their ministry;" here is evidence of a succession of teachers, but no evidence that any of those teachers possessed the powers which are conceived to distinguish those, whom we now call bishops, from presbyters."* For Clemens uses a word which in Scripture is applied to all Christian teachers; and by the omission of *πρεσβυτεροὶ* in this early enumeration of office-bearers, he seems to consider *ἐπισκοποὶ* and *πρεσβυτεροὶ* as equivalent. Other ancient writers, too, in those very passages which have been quoted as their testimony to the uninterrupted succession of bishops, are found, upon a critical attention to their words, to mean nothing more than the succession of apostolical doctrine conveyed through the men, whom the apostles appointed to teach it, whether those men are called *ἐπισκοποὶ* or *πρεσβυτεροὶ*.

3. Lastly, with regard to this point of apostolical succession, it is to be considered that we have no reason to presume, that in all the places where the apostles preached, they observed one fixed course of settling church government. The book of Acts, after the conversion of the apostle Paul, is chiefly a history of his journeyings; and by comparing incidental passages of that book, with the information which may be collected from his epistles, we are enabled to form a conception of the plan of government which he established in some churches; or rather different systems with regard to that plan have been built upon his words. But we have no means of following him in a great part of his progress; and of what was done by the other apostles, who, in the execution of their universal commission, visited different quarters of the world, Scripture gives little information, and ancient writers speak very generally and uncertainly. Our knowledge, therefore, extends to only a part of the practice of one apostle. But it is a conclusion which the premises by no means warrant, that what was done by one apostle in planting some churches, was done by every other apostle in planting all churches. The presumption rather is, that the apostles would accommodate establishments to circumstances, to the numbers whom they had converted, or the numbers of future converts whom the largeness of the city or the situation of the country might lead them to expect; and that they would leave many things to be settled as the future occasions of the church might require. This is so agreeable to the course of human affairs, to the shortness of the stay which the apostles could afford to make in most places, and to the general and prudential directions contained in the Epistles of Paul, that although we had no particular authority for it, a candid inquirer would be inclined to suppose it must have happened. But the fact is, that some other writers say nearly the same thing, and Epiphanius, a bishop of the fourth century, gives precisely this account of the matter. The apostles, he states, were not able to settle all things at once. But according to the number of believers, and the qualifications for the different offices which

* King on Prim. Church, iv. 3.

those whom they found appeared to possess, they appointed in some places only a bishop and deacons, in others, presbyters and deacons; in others, a bishop, presbyters, and deacons; and this, says Epiphanius, accounts for the variety in the addresses used by Paul in his Epistles, as he wrote according to the present state of things before the church had received all its offices.*

As far as the authority of Epiphanius is of any weight, this statement contradicts the opinion of an universal establishment of Episcopacy by the apostles, and a continued succession of bishops from their days. But it will occur to you, that he seems to represent the Episcopal form of government as the completion of that plan which they began, and which they would have completed themselves, if circumstances had permitted. Here, then, is a strong ground to which the defenders of that form may betake themselves, after all that has been said. For allowing, what they do not allow, that in Scripture there is no evidence of an intention to establish a permanent distinction between bishops and presbyters, and allowing that there is a chasm of many years after the days of the apostles, in which there is no evidence of a succession of persons having those peculiar powers which are ascribed to bishops, yet, it is certain, that the history of the Christian church presents to every observer that form of government which is called Episcopal. There may have been, from various local causes, instances of church government being conducted for many years without bishops; and it may be true, that some nations, as has been affirmed with regard to Scotland in early times, had no Christian teachers bearing that name. But these partial interruptions or irregularities are overlooked by one who attends to the general appearance of Christendom. For, although in Scripture, and in the writings of the apostolical fathers, bishops and presbyters may be confounded, yet, in the second century, the name bishops appears to have been appropriated to an order of men, who had a priority in rank above other Christian teachers; and from the second century to the time of the Reformation, it is unquestionable that this order of men continued to exist in almost all parts of the Christian world, was acknowledged to possess the right of exercising peculiar powers, and was looked up to with respect, and a degree of submission, by both clergy and laity. Now, this general consent of the Christian church seems to afford convincing evidence, that the distinction between bishops and presbyters, if not founded in Scripture or apostolical appointment, was a continuation of that establishment which the apostles began, and probably the consequence of directions which they gave in planting churches. At least, it appears to be incumbent upon those, who have departed from this early and general practice, to give some other account, equally rational and probable, of the manner in which it was introduced.

The challenge is undoubtedly a fair one; and the strength of the Episcopal cause lies in the statement which I have now given. Yet, notwithstanding the presumption in favour of the apostolical appointment of Episcopacy, which certainly arises from its having had possession of the Christian church for so many ages, we think we are

* *Irenicum*, vi.

able to show that the form of government, to which Presbyterians have recurred, is not to be regarded as a novel invention.

From various circumstances formerly mentioned it appears probable, that though the apostles did not follow one uniform course, yet, in many of the principal cities which they visited, they ordained a number of teachers, whom they called *πρεσβυτεροι*. In Ephesus, Corinth, Jerusalem, and other places, the number of believers, even during the life of the apostles, was probably too great to assemble in one house, so that in those places there might be a necessity for more than one teacher. But, independently of this circumstance, the apostles, according to an expression that occurred in the passage lately quoted from Clemens, had a regard to the interests *των μελλοντων πιστευν*; and when, being themselves upon the spot, they could exercise that gift of “discerning spirits,” which was one of the extraordinary powers conferred upon them by the Holy Ghost, they chose to provide for the future increase of believers in different districts, by setting apart, “for the work of the ministry,” such as they found worthy. This *cætus presbyterorum* attended to all the spiritual concerns of the Christians in the city where they resided, apportioning among themselves the different offices which might minister to their edification and comfort; and they were ready to embrace every favourable opportunity of communicating to the inhabitants of the adjoining region, those glad tidings which had been unfolded in the city by the apostles themselves. A body of presbyters, acting in concert for these ends, would naturally hold frequent meetings, that individuals might report their success, and that all the members might consult about the most prudent methods of promoting their common object. In these meetings some person would preside for the sake of order: and whether this precedency went by seniority, or by rotation, or was a permanent office conferred by election upon one of the presbyters, it implied, in the person who held it, a precedency, an efficiency, a degree of control over the rest, and a title to respect. To this person two names appear to have been applied in very ancient times, *επισκοπος* and *αγγελος*. There was a peculiar propriety in giving him the name *επισκοπος*, while the other members of the *cætus* retained the name *πρεσβυτεροι*, because, as these two names are in Scripture equivalent, this appropriation did not imply that he possessed any powers different in kind from those of presbyters; it only intimated his being invested by office with a certain inspection. The other name *αγγελος* was probably borrowed from the service of the Jewish synagogue, where it was applied to the person who presided in the worship, and exhorted the people. It is found in the epistles sent by the apostle John, in the book of the Revelation, to the seven churches of Asia, every one of which is inscribed *τω αγγελω της Εφεσου εκκλησιας, της εκκλησιας Σμυρναϊων, της εν Περγαμω εκκλησιας, &c.* We know that at Ephesus, one of the seven churches, there were several elders whom Paul had ordained. But if one of this *cætus presbyterorum* was president, it was natural for the apostle to inscribe the epistle to him; and as the name *τω αγγελω της εκκλησιας* certainly leads us to think of one, and not of many, we consider it as the name of the president. While the joint employment of the pastors, in caring for the spiritual interests of the Christians in the city, thus gave occasion to the existence

of a person who stood forth distinguished from the rest, their labours in converting the inhabitants of the adjoining country tended to produce the same effect. If these labours were crowned with any degree of success, the congregations formed by them would feel a connexion with the mother church, from which they had received their pastors. The presbyters settled in the country would probably wish to maintain a fellowship with the *cætus presbyterorum* to which they had belonged; or the care of all the Christians, both in the city and in the country, would be considered as belonging to the whole *cætus*, who would assign tasks and departments to individual members, as appeared to them most expedient. In either case, this increase of the number of Christians would multiply the occasions, upon which the person who presided over the *cætus* would appear in his character of president, and afford him various opportunities of extending his claims, and enlarging his powers; so that with no greater degree of sagacity and attention to the succession of events than is commonly displayed in the conduct of human affairs, the president of the *cætus presbyterorum* might establish himself in such a pre-eminence over the individual members, as corresponds to the description given in the second and third centuries of the dignity of bishop.

We cannot doubt that common prudence would dictate that gradual extension of the powers of the bishop, which might create the least possible alarm; and yet we are unable to tell all the steps by which the president of the college of presbyters rose to the estimation of being an office-bearer exalted above presbyters by special powers; nor can we assign the dates of the several extensions of his privileges. But, if the most zealous friends of episcopacy are obliged to plead the deficiency of all the ecclesiastical records of early times, as an apology for their not producing authentic catalogues of that succession of bishops which they pretend to have existed, we are equally entitled to plead the same deficiency, in excuse of the want of particularity in our delineation of that progress by which we account for the introduction of episcopacy. We hold that the progress is abundantly probable, by being agreeable to the course of human affairs in other things; and we find this general probability very much confirmed by two particular circumstances belonging to this subject. One is, that, after the days of the apostles, there did arise, by human institution, an imparity among the bishops. For although every bishop claims, in respect of his office, to be a successor of the apostles, and although ancient writers agree that a bishop of the poorest city has the same priesthood as a bishop of the richest, and that, in the care of his own diocese, he has full power to determine for himself, and is subject to none but Christ, yet there was introduced in the first four centuries, the gradation of patriarchs, metropolitans, archbishops, and bishops. There were the patriarchs of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Antioch, whose jurisdiction extended over all the Christian church; under these were the metropolitans, who presided in the several provinces; and under them the archbishops, each of whom had the inspection of several bishops in a district. This gradation was probably introduced by those general councils, which, in the second century, began to be held by Christians,

and in which it was considered as a piece of respect due to the principal cities of the empire, that the bishops of those cities should preside. Various circumstances led the Christians, even before their religion had the benefit of a public establishment, to accommodate the government of the church to the government of the state; and when the empire became Christian, Constantine judged it a matter of policy to complete this accommodation. In conformity to the exarchates, provinces, and districts, into which he divided the empire, he established a hierarchy composed of different orders of bishops, who were distinguished from one another, not only in respect of rank, but also in respect of privileges and power; and so agreeable was this establishment to the practice which the Christians themselves had begun, and to their sentiments, that the council of Nice, which met so early as A. D. 325, recognised the prerogatives claimed by the bishops of Rome, Antioch, and Alexandria, as *τα αρχαια εθη*, and declared that it would disown every bishop, who is ordained *χωρις γνωμης του μητροπολιτου*. Now, if this limitation of the powers of bishops, and this subjection of many of them to those with whom they were originally equal, had become so general during the first three centuries, as to obtain, in 325, the highest ecclesiastical sanction, we have no reason to be surprised, if, in the same time, a bishop should be exalted from being the first among equals chosen by their suffrage, to be accounted an office-bearer of a higher order than presbyters. The Episcopal writers say that the cases are by no means similar, because all bishops are by their office equal, whereas bishops and presbyters are so essentially distinct, that it never was accounted lawful for presbyters to intermeddle in those actions which are appropriated to a bishop. But, in answer to this, we bring forward a second circumstance, that many expressions in ancient writers correspond to this account of the origin of Episcopacy, and that there are some passages in which the same account is given. There are, it is true, books that assume a very early date, which speak clearly and strongly of the superiority of bishops above presbyters;—such as the apostolical constitutions, and the larger epistles of Ignatius. But it is now generally understood by learned men, that these books are full of interpolations, the works of a much later age, inserted for the very purpose of magnifying the Episcopal office. Those writers of the second and third centuries, whose works are admitted to be genuine, abound with expressions which represent the presbyters as partners with the bishops, in the honours and duties of the episcopal office. They call the presbyters, as well as the bishops, the successors of the apostles; and Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, who is esteemed one of the most zealous defenders of Episcopacy, declares that it was his invariable rule to do nothing without the advice and concurrence of his co-presbyters.* Jerome, who lived about the end of the fourth century, gives in different parts of his works, precisely the same account of the origin of Episcopacy as we do. In one place, where he quotes all the passages of the New Testament, in which the names bishops and presbyters appear to be synonymous, he says that, before there were parties in religion, churches were governed *communi*

* King on the Prim. Church, iv, 4; v. 6.

consilio presbyterorum. But that afterwards, in order to pull up the roots of division, *toto orbe decretum est*, i. e. it became an universal practice founded upon experience of its expediency, that one of the presbyters should be chosen by the rest to be the head, and that the care of governing the church should be committed to him. Let presbyters, therefore, he says, know that they are subject, by the custom of the church, to him who presides over them; and let bishops know that they are greater than presbyters, rather by custom than by the appointment of the Lord, and that still the church ought to be governed in common.

So pointed a testimony against the apostolical institution of Episcopacy, proceeding from a writer so respectable and so ancient as Jerome, whom Erasmus calls without controversy the most learned of Christians, forms an authority which the Presbyterians gladly lay hold of, and which their antagonists show an extreme solicitude to invalidate. It is said that Jerome was too late to know the truth; that being himself only a presbyter, he was willing to propagate a system which might bring bishops nearer to a level with himself, and that in this system he is singular. We, on the other hand, are not disposed to entertain any suspicion with regard to the motives of his testimony, because he appears to us only to assert, at a time when he had more opportunities of information than we have, the same thing which we gather from the words of Scripture, from the general appearance of the primitive church, and from various particular expressions of Christian writers. We do not account his testimony singular, although no person has said precisely the same thing. But when we find Augustine, who was a bishop, writing to Jerome, *Secundum honorum vocabula quæ jam ecclesiæ usus obtinuit, episcopatus presbyterio major est*;* when we find Isidore, bishop of Seville, two hundred years after, where he has stated the different offices in which presbyters are partners with bishops, adding these words, *Sola propter auctoritatem summo sacerdoti clericorum ordinatio reservata est, ne a multis ecclesiæ disciplina vindicata concordiam solveret*:—and when we find the second council of Seville, about the same time, using these words, *Quamvis cum episcopis plurimum presbyteris ministeriorum communis sit dispensatio, quedam novellis et ecclesiasticis regulis sibi prohibita noverint*;† we cannot entertain a doubt, that an opinion somewhat similar to ours, concerning the introduction of Episcopacy as a matter of order, and the gradual extension of the claims and privileges of bishops, was very far from being peculiar to Jerome. It is true that this opinion, although corresponding with various incidental expressions in numberless writers, was not, before the Reformation, generally brought forward in clear words. But this we think may be accounted for, by an apprehension that the dignity and authority of the Episcopal order, which was esteemed essential to the honour and peace of the church, would be weakened by recalling to the minds of the people the manner in which it arose. The reformers, by whom the Presbyterian church was settled, were restrained by no such delicacy. Considering the distinction between bishops and presbyters as having no founda-

* Aug. Ep. xxix.

† Irenicum, chap. vi.

tion in Scripture, and wishing to apply an effectual remedy to the abuses which had been introduced in the progress of human ambition, by the practice of investing bishops with powers superior to presbyters, they did not consider the antiquity or universality of the practice as any reason for its being continued; and they resolved to provide for the order of the Christian society, by recurring to what appeared to them the primitive Scripture model. The fundamental principle, therefore, of the government which they established is this, that all ministers of the gospel are equal in rank and in power. While certain parts of the apostolical office expired with the persons to whom it was committed by the Lord Jesus, the right of performing all the ministerial functions, which were intended to be perpetual in the Christian church, is conceived to be conveyed by the act of ordination, so that every person who is ordained is as much a successor of the apostles as any teacher of religion can be. This essential equality of all the ministers of the gospel is inconsistent with the idea of prelacy, or any superiority of office in the Christian church above that of presbyters; and it admits no other official preference, but that which is constituted by voluntary agreement for the sake of order. Thus, if a number of those, who are called in the New Testament indiscriminately *πρεσβυτεροι* or *επισκοποι*, have the charge of a large city or a territory, it is necessary for the conduct of their deliberations, and the execution of their sentences, that some one should preside in their meetings: and in the mode of nominating the president, there may be considerable variety. The members may succeed to the office by seniority, or one may be elected for life, or a new president may be chosen at stated times. In some of those churches upon the Continent, which acknowledge a parity of orders, there are superintendents, *præpositi*, or *inspectores*, who are appointed for life to preside in the council of presbyters, and are invested with a kind of inspection over the individual pastors. But having no other superiority than that which is necessarily implied in the office of president, and no claim to any powers or privileges from which presbyters are necessarily excluded, they are only accounted *primi inter pares*. The greater part of Presbyterian churches, from a jealousy lest prelacy be introduced under the form of superintendency, prefer the frequent election of a new president or moderator, who, being the executive officer of the society in which he presides, acts in their name, and appears at their head, but who, when his term is expired, returns to a perfect equality with his brethren.*

* This is the fundamental principle of the Presbyterian government, and a general account of the method of preserving order, which is there substituted in place of Episcopacy. A more particular delineation of the system erected upon this foundation, together with some remarks suggested by the review which has been taken of the Episcopal and Presbyterian forms of church government, will be found in Section II. of *A View of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland*, published by the author in 1817. The question respecting the office of lay elders is there briefly discussed, the heads of argument only being given. The argument might have been somewhat extended here from the author's manuscripts; but it did not seem material to swell the present work, by enlarging on the subject.—ED.

CHAPTER III.

NATURE AND EXTENT OF POWER IMPLIED IN CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

I COME now to the second great division, into which all the questions that have arisen upon the subject of church government may be resolved, viz. the opinions that have been maintained respecting the nature and the degree of power implied in that government.

There were times when these opinions held an importance in the public estimation, and were defended with a zeal and animosity, of which it is difficult for us in our day to form a conception. I am very far from wishing to revive any portion of that bitterness; nor do I think it necessary for you to be intimately acquainted with all the tenets and arguments which have been broached in this voluminous controversy. I shall be able sufficiently to accomplish the purpose of this part of my course, by reducing all that may be said concerning the powers implied in church government, under five general positions. In illustrating these positions, I shall introduce the chief opinions that have been held upon this subject; and, by this manner of introducing them, I shall state, in the order which it will be easiest for you to follow and to retain, because it is the most natural order, both the principles from which the several opinions flow, and the sources from which the antagonists of each of them derived what they accounted a sufficient confutation.

1. The first general position is this, that the power implied in the exercise of church government is not a power created by the state, or flowing entirely from those regulations, which the supreme rulers of the state may choose to make with regard to the Christian society.

It is necessary to begin with opposing this fundamental position to an opinion, which, from its author, is known by the name of Erastianism. In the course of the sixteenth century there flourished Erastus, a native of Switzerland, an acute philosopher, and a learned physician. In opposition to the judicial astrology which was then esteemed and practised, he recommended and improved the study of chemistry. Amongst other branches of the learning of the times which engaged his researches, he did not neglect theology. He embraced the reformed religion from conviction: but in consequence of the exorbitant claims advanced both by the Pope and by the rulers of some of the reformed churches, he conceived it was his duty as a good Protestant, in the beginning of the Reformation, to resolve all the powers exercised by church governors into the will of the state. It was his opinion, that the office-bearers in the Christian church, as such, are merely instructors, who fulfil their office by admonishing

and endeavouring to persuade Christians, but who have no power, unless it is given them by the state, to inflict penalties of any kind. Every thing, therefore, which we are accustomed to call ecclesiastical censure, was considered by him as a civil punishment, which the state might employ the ministers of religion to inflict, but which, as to the occasion, the manner and the effect of its being inflicted, was as completely under the direction of the civil power, as any branch of the criminal code.

We shall afterwards find, that the inconveniencies, which this opinion was meant to remedy, may be obviated in other ways. As to the opinion itself, it discovers those partial views which the consideration of inconveniencies often occasions; and it seems impossible for any person, whose mind comprehends the whole subject, not to perceive that the opinion is false. Even were the Christian society merely a voluntary association, into which men entered without being obliged to it, still this society would possess the right which is inherent in the nature of all societies, of defending itself against intrusion and insult, and of preserving the character which it chose to assume, by refusing to admit those whom it judged unworthy of being members, or by requiring them to depart. But the Christian church is to be regarded in a much higher light than as a voluntary association. It is a society created by divine institution, founded in the duty which Jesus requires of his disciples to “confess him before men,” and to unite for the purpose of performing certain rites. The members of this society, as his disciples, profess to believe certain doctrines, and declare that they are bound to maintain a certain character. This profession and declaration, being the very terms which bind the society together, are implied in the solemnities by which every member is admitted, or expresses his resolution to continue in the society. The administration of these solemnities, therefore, while it prevents those who do not comply with the terms from being admitted, indicates a warrant from the founder of the society, to deprive of all its privileges those, who, after having been admitted, depart from the terms upon which their admission proceeded. It is reasonable to think that the same persons, who are appointed to administer the solemn rites by which the society is distinguished from all others, will be intrusted with the power of judging who are to be admitted and who may deserve to be excluded from the society; and it is obvious to every one who reads the New Testament, that the names there given to those persons are expressive of the degree of inspection and authority, which this act of judgment implies. They are called ἡγούμενοι, ἐπίσκοποι, προεστώτες. They are commanded not only διδάσκειν, ἰνυθετεῖν, παρὰκαλεῖν, but also ἐλεγχεῖν, ἐπιτιμαῖν. Our Saviour, in the days of his ministry, before he had fully constituted his church, spoke of a case in which it was the duty of Christians to consider a person, who had been a brother, as having, by his own fault, forfeited that character, so as to deserve to be looked upon as a heathen and a publican. Matth. xviii. 17. After the church was constituted, the apostle speaks of κνθερνησεις, as well as διδασκαλους, being set in it by God. 1 Cor. xii. 28. He claims an ἐξουσία as belonging to him. 2 Cor. x. He exercises that ἐξουσία by commanding the Corinthians ἐξαιρεῖν a wicked person who had been a member of that church; he

exhorts Christians *μη συναναμικνυσθαι εις τις αδελφος ονομαζομενος λαιδωρος, η μεθυσος, η αγρας, &c.*; he represents it as their duty *κρινειν ου τους εξω, αλλα τους εσω*; and he assigns as a reason for their exercising this judicial power over those who were members of the church, that the wicked person, by being thus separated, might be amended, or brought to a better mind, and that the infection of his wickedness might be prevented from spreading. 1 Cor. v. Now these are general reasons arising from the nature and purposes of the Christian society, and totally independent of any authority which the church may derive from the state; and the church acted upon these reasons, both in the days of the apostles, and in the subsequent ages, when it derived no countenance or support from the state, but suffered persecution. Even then it exercised the power resulting from its character, delegated to it by its author, and implied in the designations given to its office-bearers, by rebuking and censuring the faults of its members, and by expelling those whom it judged unworthy of its privileges.

These reasonings and facts seem to establish, with incontrovertible evidence, that some kind of authority over the members belongs essentially to the governors of the Christian society; that, as the church did exist before it was united with the state, it may exist without any such union; and that it will possess, in this state of separation, when it can derive no aid from civil regulations, all the authority which Christ meant to convey through his apostles to their successors, and of the exercise of which the apostles have left examples. The same reasoning and facts also prove, that when the church receives the protection and countenance of the civil power, she does not, by this alliance, lose those rights and powers which are implied in church government, as such. But as the church may encroach upon the state, by advancing claims which are not warranted by the purpose of her institution, or the will of her founder; so, on the other hand, the state may violate the immunities of the church, may intrench upon that jurisdiction which is essential to her character, and may forcibly subject the members of the Christian society to civil regulations with regard to those parts of their conduct, which, from their nature, fall under the authority of the office-bearers of the church. It requires a sound judgment, a mind which can easily disembarass itself from the false views suggested by prejudice, passion, and interest, to make, upon all occasions, the necessary discrimination between the rights of the church, and the rights of the state; and as the line of distinction is not always obvious to an ordinary observer, those who keep on one side of the line are very apt to bring the charge of Erastianism against those who keep on the other. In modern times, this charge is not understood to imply that those, against whom it is brought, deny the church any power except what she derives from the state; for few follow the principles of Erastianism so far. The charge is meant to impute to the members of an established church too great a deference to the civil authority from which they derive protection, and an unbecoming tameness in submitting to invasions of those rights, which the church ought to hold sacred. It is a charge very commonly brought by the dissenters of this country against the church of Scotland: and in both the established churches of this island, there are members, whose zeal, in

defence of what they account the rights of the church, leads them to accuse of lukewarmness and Erastianism those who do not entertain the same opinion concerning the nature of the rights, or concerning the most prudent and effectual manner of preserving them inviolate. It is often a matter of intricate discussion, how far the accusation is just. Many of the cases, to which it has been applied, will occur in the progress of illustrating other general positions respecting church government; and I will not anticipate the mention of them. It is enough that I have given notice of the modern meaning of Erastianism; and from that meaning it will be perceived that my first general position may be considered as incontrovertible; for almost all who are now accused of Erastianism admit that the church has powers independent of the state. They differ from others as to the measure and extent of those powers, or the prudence of exercising them: they may perhaps regard the advantages which the church derives from an union with the state as more than a compensation for any restrictions which are imposed upon her; but they consider the acquiescence in these restrictions as a voluntary surrender, a compact in which the church has gained, by giving up what she had a right to retain. And thus the modern system of Erastianism proceeds upon this principle, that the power of the church is essential and intrinsic: it admits of modifications of this intrinsic power which to some appear exceptionable; but it acknowledges, that if the church, instead of deriving any benefit from the state, were opposed and persecuted by the civil magistrate, it would be not only proper, but necessary, to put forth of herself those powers, which, in more favourable circumstances, she chooses to exercise only in conjunction with the state.

2. My second general position is, that the power inherent in the nature of the Christian society, which it derives from divine institution, and not from civil regulation, is merely a spiritual power; in other words, it is concerned only with the consciences of men, and gives no claim to any authority over their persons or their properties.

It includes a right to administer instruction, admonition, reproof, censure—all that may establish those, who submit to it, in the practice of their duty, may improve their character, or make them ashamed of their faults. It includes also, we have seen, what is commonly called the power of excommunication, *i. e.* a right, by a judicial sentence, to deprive of the privileges and benefits of continuing members of the Christian society those who are found unworthy. But this is the utmost length to which it can go. Whenever a person is excommunicated, or when he says that he no longer submits to the authority of church government, that authority ceases with regard to him: he is to the church “as a heathen man and a publican;” and excommunication, being the severest infliction within the compass of the power implied in church government, completely exhausts that power, so as to leave nothing more which it can warrantably do.

That the power of which we are speaking is merely a spiritual power, may easily be deduced from the purposes for which the Christian society was instituted; and this deduction is confirmed by explicit declarations of the divine founder.

Human government is ordained of God, for the purpose of securing the subjects in the possession and enjoyment of their rights. The

administration of it, therefore, implies the exercise of a coercive power, which may restrain those who are disposed to invade the rights of others, or which, if the execution of their purpose is not prevented, may inflict such a punishment upon the transgression, as shall deter from a repetition of the like outrage. But the kingdom of Christ, being founded in opposition, not to human violence, but to the influence of an evil spirit, was established for the purpose of delivering men from this spiritual thralldom, by imparting to them the knowledge of that truth which Christ reveals, by cherishing those graces which his Spirit forms, and by leading them, in the obedience of his precepts, and the imitation of his example, to that future happiness of which his mediation encourages them to entertain the hope. This kingdom was not intended to secure men in the enjoyment of their rights. For although the principles which it inspires renders its dutiful subjects incapable of doing injury to others, and although the establishment and propagation of it have produced a salutary effect upon the manners of mankind in general, still it supposes that the evil passions of men will continue to operate; it gives notice that wrong will be done; it teaches how wrong ought to be borne; and it represents reproach, and injury, and persecution, as forming part of that discipline, by which its subjects are prepared for a higher state of being, where their sufferings are to cease, and their patience is to be rewarded. The administration of this kingdom, therefore, does not imply the exercise of force. Although all power in heaven and in earth is committed to the Lord of this kingdom, yet, in that branch of the administration of his kingdom, which he has reserved in his own hands, he does not employ his power to place a guard round his faithful subjects. To that protection, which they derive from the general course of Providence, and from the means of defence furnished by human government, he makes no other addition, than the influence which his doctrine has upon the minds of their neighbours, and the esteem and good-will of which their own character, formed by his doctrine, renders them the object. In like manner, in that branch of the administration of the kingdom of Christ, which we call church government, he does not suppose that his office-bearers are invested with civil power. The end of their appointment is, to bring to a better mind such of their brethren as have erred and transgressed; and in this end they often succeed by the spiritual power which is given them. But they are not allowed to employ a method of cure inconsistent with the spirit of the Christian religion; and those who are obstinate and incorrigible they are commanded to leave where they found them.

There were three occasions in our Lord's life, upon which, agreeably to the deduction that has now been made, he declared explicitly that the administration of his kingdom upon earth implied a spiritual, not a civil power. The first was his answer to an application made to him by one of his hearers, "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me." Luke xii. 13. Instead of using his influence with either of the parties, or giving any decision upon the matter in dispute, he said, "Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?" And he proceeded to guard his hearers against covetousness; intimating, in the most significant manner, that his re-

ligion tends to form that elevation of desire—that degree of detachment from the paltry and unsatisfying goods of this world, which will preserve his disciples from injuring one another; but that, if this tendency fails in any instance, the party who considers himself aggrieved, must resort to the laws of his country, and seek redress in the ordinary course of justice.

The second occasion was a request from two of his disciples, who, employing the fondness of a mother as a cover for their own ambition, asked of Jesus that, in his kingdom, which they then expected to be a kingdom of pomp and triumph, they “might sit the one on his right hand, and the other on his left.” After exposing their ignorance and folly, he turned to the ten, who were moved with indignation at these two for asking an honour to which each thought himself equally entitled, and he said, Matt. xx. 25, 26, “Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them; and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister.” In human governments, great men *κατακυριεύουσι καὶ κατέξουσιν αὐτοὺς*; words which do not imply the abuse of power by tyrannical rule, but merely the possession and the exercise of power, that degree of influence and authority which renders their offices an object of ambition. “It shall not,” says Jesus to his disciples, “be so among you.” Although there are persons distinguished by the station which they hold in my kingdom, their office is a ministry, not a dominion. They are subservient to the improvement of their brethren. They have the authority, and they are entitled to the respect which their subserviency requires. But they have none of the power and authority which is implied in the office of earthly rulers; and their station is not an object of ambition.

The third occasion was furnished by the examination of our Lord before Pilate. The astonishment expressed by the Roman magistrate, at the mean appearance of a man who claimed to be king of the Jews, drew from our Lord this declaration, John xviii. 36, 37, “My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” These words require no commentary. Our Lord disclaims the use of force; represents the influence of truth over the mind as the great instrument of his dominion; and characterises the power exercised in his kingdom as a spiritual, not a civil power.

The conduct of our Lord was agreeable to these declarations. He paid tribute; he inculcated submission to the established government, saying, “Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar’s;” and although his miracles appeared at different times to have given him entire command of the multitude, he studiously avoided that ostentation of popularity, which might have disturbed the public peace. His apostles, in like manner, with the utmost solicitude, warned the first Christians against considering their faith as furnishing any pretext

for resisting the authority of civil government. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."* "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers."† The weapons of the Christian warfare are said to be "not carnal;"‡ and persecution for conscience sake, however sinful in those from whose authority it proceeds, is not allowed by the apostles to justify resistance.§ The first establishment of the Christian church required the frequent exercise of that apostolical authority, which, upon all proper occasions, is asserted with becoming dignity. But this authority is distinguished, both in the words and in the practice of the apostles, from every thing which can be called a "lordship over God's heritage." In all the ordinances which they issued, they kept sacredly within the province which belongs to a spiritual power; and in the directions given to Timothy and Titus, the most critical eye cannot discern the smallest deviation from that pure standard of church government, which the head of the church exhibited in these words, "my kingdom is not of this world."

Thus clear and superabundant is the proof, that the power implied in church government is purely a spiritual, not in any degree a civil power. The uses which may be made of the position are not less important than the proof of it is clear.

It exposes, in the first place, the fallacy of the great argument upon which the Erastian system rests. There cannot, it is said, be any power in the state which is not created by the state; otherwise there would be, *imperium in imperio*, two separate authorities and jurisdictions, which might require inconsistent services, and assert opposite claims, so as to place the subjects in a situation in which it was impossible for them to obey both. This argument would be unanswerable if the powers were of the same order, if both disposed of the persons and properties of the subjects, and both employed force to insure obedience to their commands. But if the one is a civil and the other a spiritual power, they may unite with the most perfect harmony; and instead of any inconvenience, the greatest advantages may result to both from their union.

The advantages which the church imparts to the state arise from the nature and the purpose of that power which exists in every Christian society. This power, addressing itself to the understanding, to the conscience and the heart, may correct excesses of the passions which human regulations cannot reach, and, by furnishing refined and permanent principles of good conduct, may minister most effectually to the order and happiness of the community. This is the genuine influence of the doctrine of Christ. The power which is founded upon his doctrine ministers its part of this influence, so long as it retains the character of being purely spiritual. It is perverted when it is rendered the instrument of disturbing the public tranquillity; and it goes beyond the purpose of its institution, when its particular requisitions intrench upon that right over the persons or properties of the subjects, which belongs exclusively to the sovereign authority in the state.

Such abuses have, indeed, frequently taken place in the Christian

* 1 Pet. ii. 13.

† Rom. xiii. 1.

‡ 2 Cor. x. 4.

§ 1 Pet. ii. 19, 20, iii. 14. Rom. xiii. 5.

church. But they have always arisen from confounding a spiritual and a civil power; and the position which we have now illustrated, if well understood and followed out through its consequences, will always be sufficient to correct them. The correction of such abuses is the second purpose to which this position may be turned. This I shall illustrate by applying the position to the extravagant assertions of some of the sects which appeared after the Reformation; and also to the exemptions and powers claimed by the church of Rome.

At the time of the Reformation, when the minds of men, newly emancipated from spiritual tyranny, were in a state of effervescence and commotion, such as they had not before experienced, there arose various sects, who, although they differed in some points, received, from their repetition of baptism, the common name of Anabaptists, and who agreed also in considering the church of Christ as a society of saints, to which none could belong who were not free from sin. In consequence of this principle, they considered the office of magistracy, which is appointed for the punishment of evil-doers, as useless amongst Christians. From talking of it as useless, they came to revile it as sinful; and men of violent spirits, irritated by opposition, proceeded from words to actions; collected a great army in the year 1525, and, to use the words of Mosheim, “declared war against all laws, governments, and magistrates, of every kind, under the chimerical pretext, that Christ was now to take the reins of civil and ecclesiastical government into his own hands, and to rule alone over the nations.”* That army was dispersed by the princes of Germany; but the principle upon which the army had acted was far from being eradicated. It often broke forth in occasional tumults; it was fostered under a slight disguise in the creeds of those sects, which derived their names from the ancient Anabaptists; it lifted its head in this country during the turbulence of the 17th century; and there is reason to believe that it still lurks in some of those sects which exist upon the Continent. It is a principle which requires to be corrected by punishment, not by reasoning; and every approach to it, in the creed of any Christian society, ought to be narrowly watched as formidable to the state. It is unnecessary for me to prove that this horrid tenet is contrary to Scripture. I shall only refer to our Confession of Faith, chap. xx. xxiii. where passages are adduced in support of the positions there laid down, “that it is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate; and that they who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God, and may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the church, and by the power of the civil magistrate.”

The second position may also be applied to the exemptions and powers claimed by the church of Rome.

It was one great object of the policy of the church of Rome to render the clergy of every country a distinct body in the state; and thus, having no close connexion with any community, and acknowledging no other sovereign authority, they might, throughout all Christendom,

* Mosheim's Eccles. Cent. xvi. Art. ANABAPTISTS.

be kept entirely dependent upon Popes. For this purpose it was asserted that, in virtue of the sacredness of the sacerdotal character, the clergy were exempted from the ordinary jurisdiction of the countries where they resided, not only in spiritual, but also in civil matters; that they were not bound to pay tribute; and that when they committed any crime, they were amenable only to their ecclesiastical superiors, and could not be punished by the civil magistrate. These claims withdrew from obedience to the laws a numerous order of men, who, in addition to their large property, had more learning than any other order; and by instituting a gradation of ecclesiastical courts, from which there lay an appeal in the last resort to the court of Rome, rendered them subject to a foreign power. Claims so dangerous to the peace and order of society were advanced by slow degrees; were artfully accommodated to times and circumstances; were always resisted by wise and able princes; and, in Britain, were abridged by various statutes enacted in the times of Popery, and were finally abolished at the Reformation. In England it was declared by Parliament, and by the clergy, that to "the king's majesty the chief government of all estates of the realm, whether they be ecclesiastical or civil, in all causes, doth appertain, and is not, nor ought to be, subject to any foreign jurisdiction."* In Scotland, too, all papal jurisdiction was at the same period abolished; and our Confession of Faith declares, that "ecclesiastical persons are not exempted from the duty of the people to pray for magistrates, to honour their persons, to pay them tribute and other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority for conscience sake."† Both in England and Scotland, indeed, clergymen are exempted from certain personal services, which are conceived to be inconsistent with their sacred function. They are not summoned as jurymen, and they are not obliged to serve in war. But these exemptions are the result of positive statute, or of that immemorial custom, which receives the name of common law; and they form part of that provision, which the state judges it proper to make, for the regular discharge of the duties incumbent upon the ministers of religion. Such exemptions, being accepted as a civil privilege, and being limited by the terms of the grant, are a recognition on the part of the church, that it has no claim of right to any exemption, but that, agreeably to the declarations of Scripture, and the conduct of our Lord and his apostles, "every soul is subject to the higher powers;" in other words, that the authority of the state extends over ecclesiastical, as well as other persons.

The church of Rome claimed not only exemptions, but also powers. The sentences of the ecclesiastical courts often affected the most valuable civil rights of Christians. The ministers of religion arrogated a precedency of all civil magistrates, and a right to control the exercise of all civil jurisdiction. The popes granted the investiture of ecclesiastical benefices in a kingdom, without the consent, often in opposition to the declared pleasure of the sovereign. They presumed to absolve subjects from all obligation to obey their civil rulers, when the conduct of the rulers gave offence to the church. They often deposed princes for heresy or contumacy; and some popes proceeded

* Art. xxxvii.

† Confession of Faith, xxiii. 4.

to such extravagance, as to affirm that Jesus Christ had given them power to dispose of all the kingdoms of the earth. These claims, opposite as they are to the genius of Christianity, and hostile to the peace of society, were for many ages strenuously asserted, and often submitted to. Had the church been able to support them as uniformly, and to extend them as far as she wished, they would have produced throughout Christendom a vile, oppressive, and rapacious despotism. The resistance, which was naturally and nobly made to them, produced some of the most calamitous contests which history records; and the memory of this usurpation should warn, not only rulers in Protestant countries to restrain every attempt which any sect may make to engraft civil upon ecclesiastical power; but also the office-bearers in the church of Christ to follow the directions and the example of their Master, by keeping scrupulously within their own province.

In order to prevent misapprehension upon this subject, it is necessary to observe, that in the progress of the connexion between the church and the state, it generally happens that some matters of a civil nature are committed to the judgment and decision of ecclesiastical courts. This delegated jurisdiction is no usurpation on the part of the church, because, like the legal immunities of the clergy, it is the effect of statute; and in the manner of exercising the civil powers thus delegated to the church, there is generally an acknowledgment that they flow from the state.

In Scotland, the sentence of the church, admitting and receiving a person minister of a parish, gives him a legal right, which he would not otherwise have, to draw the stipend and other emoluments which belong to the minister; and the sentence of the church courts, deposing him from the sacred office of the ministry, deprives him, *ipso facto*, of all right to the stipend and emoluments which he had formerly drawn. These civil effects of the sentences of our church courts are an essential branch of the establishment of Presbytery in Scotland; and there is one kind of business connected with that establishment, in which presbyteries are constituted by law civil courts. The expense of the manses and glebes, which the law allows to the ministers of the church of Scotland, is defrayed by the landholders of the parishes. They are assessed for this purpose by a judgment of the presbytery, to whom application must be made in the first instance, and who proceed, like civil courts, in the examination of the necessary witnesses. But as this is merely a regulation of conveniency, in a matter concerning which it would be very improper that the decision of a church court should be final, the powers of the presbytery, in assigning the manses and glebes, are limited; and there lies an appeal, in any stage of their proceedings, to those courts, which usually determine questions that respect the property of the subjects.

In England, besides those branches of jurisdiction that belong to the institution and deprivation of the ministers of the church, the law has submitted various other matters to the jurisdiction of the bishops. In ancient times, all matters, as well spiritual and temporal, were determined in the county court, where the bishop and earl sat together. But William the Conqueror separated the ecclesiastical from the temporal courts; and, since his days, all the causes called

ecclesiastical or spiritual, have been tried, not in the civil courts of the realm, but in courts held by authority of the bishops, and according to the forms of proceeding peculiar to those courts. The spiritual causes, which most nearly affect civil rights, are questions respecting testaments or wills, and questions respecting marriage and divorce. Both these are in England subjected to the jurisdiction of the bishop; the first, because testaments are often made *in extremis*, when the clergy may be supposed to be present; the second, because marriage, which is considered by the Roman Catholics as a sacrament, is generally solemnized in churches. In order to discuss the multiplicity of intricate business, which may be expected to arise upon these questions in such a country as England, the bishops appoint, for hearing and judging in causes that occur in their dioceses, officers under different names, generally laymen, skilled in the law, who, in the name of the bishop, but without his being present, and generally without his knowledge, decide according to established rules. With the name of one description of these officers we are acquainted in this country. For when the episcopal jurisdiction, which had been exercised under the authority of the pope, was abolished in Scotland at the Reformation, that the course of justice might not be stopped, a commissary was named for every diocese; and a commissariot court, with jurisdiction over all Scotland, was established at Edinburgh. The commissaries of Scotland, at least the commissariot court in Edinburgh, still retain the power of judging in questions of marriage and divorce, and confirmation of testaments, and thus afford us a specimen of those spiritual courts in England, where one considerable branch of the business of the nation is transacted.

Whether the constitution of these spiritual courts be proper or not, is a question, concerning which, those who live under a different religious establishment ought to be very scrupulous in declaring any opinion. But thus much is manifest, that all the jurisdiction which they exercise in civil matters is conferred by the law of the land; and they are perpetually reminded and made to feel, in the exercise of this jurisdiction, that they are under the control of the law. The canon and civil laws, by which the spiritual courts judge, have their force in England, not from any original obligations to obey the rescripts of emperors, or the decrees of popes, but purely because they have been received and allowed of by statute law, or by custom: and while the spiritual courts are permitted to judge by those laws, the courts of common law have a superintendence over them, explaining the laws which concern the extent of their jurisdiction, keeping them within the limits of that jurisdiction, and, if they exceed those limits, issuing prohibitions to restrain them, or summoning them to answer for their conduct in the civil courts.

Although then the courts in England, which are called spiritual, exercise jurisdiction in many questions totally distinct from those, which properly fall under the cognizance of a power purely spiritual, this is not to be regarded either as an usurpation on the part of the church, or as an acknowledgment on the part of the state, that the church has any inherent civil power, but merely as a part of the English constitution; a branch of the civil and religious establish-

ment of that country, by which questions of a certain kind are appointed by the state to be tried and judged in a certain manner.

The last use which I shall make of the second position is to apply it to the effects of excommunication. We have seen that church government implies a right to exclude from the privileges of the Christian society those who are deemed unworthy; and that this is the utmost length to which that power can go. We find, indeed, the apostle Paul explaining that expression of our Lord, "let him who will not hear the church be to thee as an heathen man and a publican," by exhorting the Christians to withdraw themselves from any that walked disorderly, not to mingle freely with a brother who had been guilty of any scandalous sin; not to keep company with him, that he may be ashamed.* The primitive Christians, too, a body of men who were discouraged and persecuted by the state, felt that it would have brought disgrace upon the society of the faithful, if any person who had committed a flagrant crime had been allowed to remain amongst them, or to live upon terms of intimacy with the members after he was excluded. In all times, as circumstances may render excommunication necessary, it is natural for the office-bearers of the church to warn the people against that familiar intercourse with the excommunicated, which might corrupt their own manners; and if the people approve of the sentence, they will be inclined to support it, by behaving to the excommunicated with a degree of distance and reserve, expressive of the sentiments with which they regard his condition. At the same time, it follows clearly from the second position, that the civil effects of excommunication depend entirely upon human laws. They vary with times and circumstances; and the church has no right to say that a sentence, excluding a person from the participation of the ordinances of religion, shall in any manner affect his liberty, his property, or his condition as a member of civil society. The time indeed was, when, from the superstitious fears of ignorance, and the deep persevering policy of the church of Rome, the excommunicated was considered as having forfeited not only the privileges of a citizen, but the rights of a man; when subjects were absolved from their allegiance to an excommunicated prince, when all the connexions of human life were understood to be dissolved by this sentence, and, according to the system of the ancient druids, *quibus ita interdictum est, iis omnes decedunt, et aditum eorum sermonemque defuginnt.*† These exertions of spiritual tyranny are the tale of former times; and however earnestly the office-bearers of the church may warn the people against associating freely with the excommunicated, and however much the people may think it their duty and their wisdom to listen to this warning, it is now clearly understood that excommunication has no civil effects independent of positive statute.

In England, where a great deal of civil business is transacted through the medium of the spiritual courts, excommunication being the sentence pronounced upon those who are contumacious, and the instruments by which the spiritual courts support their authority, is made by statute to infer certain legal disabilities; and if the excommunicated does not submit to the authority of the ecclesiastical courts

* 1 Cor. v. 2 Thes. iii. 6—14.

† Cæs. de Bell. Gall. vi. 13.

within forty days, the bishop, *i. e.* his delegate, who exercises jurisdiction in his name within his diocese, may apply to the civil courts for a writ, *de excommunicato capiendo*. The civil courts are thus constituted judges of the occasion upon which the sentence was pronounced, and may either lend their assistance to the spiritual courts, or refuse the writ, as they see cause. The effect of the writ being issued, is, that the excommunicated person is committed to prison, and remains there without bail till he submits. In Scotland, where there is hardly any civil business before the ecclesiastical courts, excommunication, according to the original design of that sentence, and the practice of the primitive church, is pronounced only in the case of those offences, which fall properly under the cognizance of a society invested with spiritual power. The legal disabilities which it inferred in ancient times were abolished after the Revolution; and it is in this country purely a spiritual censure.

It is not upon this account a nugatory sentence. It may, indeed, be pronounced in so unadvised a manner as to be contemptible; and an ill-timed display of spiritual power may do more harm than good. In this case the fault lies with the office-bearers of the church. Even when it is just and well founded, it may be despised by men who have no sense of religion, and no desire to maintain the appearances of decency in the eyes of their neighbours. With them, it only shares the contempt which they pour upon all the institutions of the gospel; but every person, who believes that Christ, a teacher sent from God, established a visible society upon earth, and required his disciples, as members of that society, to unite in acts of worship, by which they testify their reverence for their common master, and promote the edification of one another, must consider a sentence by which he is justly excluded from that society as placing him in a dreadful situation; and although it does not produce any consequences that are immediately felt to be hurtful in the business and common intercourse of life; yet if, in this state of separation, he retains the faith of the gospel, his mind will not be at ease, till he takes every proper and competent method of being restored to the communion of the church.

3. My third general position is, that the spiritual power implied in church government, being derived from the Lord Jesus, is subordinate to his sovereign authority over the church.

The whole system of truth revealed in the gospel directs our attention to Jesus Christ, as the person by whose generous interposition the human race was redeemed; and it is stated, that, in recompense of the sufferings which he underwent in accomplishing this object, "all things are put under his feet, and God hath given him to be the head over all things to the church."* As every doctrine is false, therefore, which derogates from any of the offices that belong to Jesus as the Saviour of the world, and which pretends to substitute any thing else in place of his interposition, so all authority in the church that is not derived from him must be an usurpation. Neither is it enough that those who exercise the authority use his name in acknowledgment of the origin of their power; for the sovereign authority of the Lord Jesus requires, that what they profess to derive from him,

* Ephes. i. 22.

they uniformly exercise according to his directions. Although he said to his apostles, "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me;"* yet the commission which he gave them was, "Go, make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."† That commission implies, that the apostles were entitled to respect and obedience from the Christian world, only while they spoke agreeably to those words which their Master had put into their mouth, and which his Spirit brought to their remembrance. Accordingly, our Lord condemned the Pharisees, the religious teachers of his day, because, while they sat in Moses' seat, they taught for doctrines the commandments of men, and made the word of God of none effect by their traditions: and he warned his disciples against that submission to those who taught in his name, which the Jewish people paid to their teachers, saying, "Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon earth, for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye masters: for one is your Master, even Christ."‡ It is known, indeed, that Jesus, having confined his own teaching to the land of Judea, committed the propagation of his religion in other countries to the labours of his apostles, that he left it to them to make the necessary provision for the continued instruction of Christians in all parts of the world, and that the Christian church received its form, not from any thing that is recorded to us as having been said by him, but from the orders given by his apostles in their discourses and their writings. It is in like manner conceivable that the apostles, who did not even travel over all the regions which have already received the gospel, who saw only the beginnings of the Christian society, and who lived in times of persecution, might leave it to the wisdom of succeeding teachers to accommodate the apostolical establishment to the more enlarged and more peaceful state of the Christian church. But as the apostles unquestionably followed the spirit of those instructions, which they received from Jesus when he spoke to them after his resurrection "of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God," so every legitimate exercise of authority, in succeeding ages, is regulated by the words of Jesus and his apostles. As no body of men, acting in his name, has a right to declare that to be a doctrine of his which he did not teach, or that to be an institution of his which he did not appoint, so he is to be considered, according to his promise, as "alway, even unto to the end of the world," with those who bear office in his church, superintending the regulations which they frame, and the acts which they perform in his name; giving his sanction to those which are agreeable to the spirit of his religion; but bearing his testimony against his ministers, when, forgetting the subjection which is implied in the origin of their power, they encroach upon the authority of him who is the supreme Teacher, Lawgiver, and Judge; the Head of his body the church; the King of his own kingdom.

All Protestants hold that the infallibility, the dominion over the faith of Christians, the power of dispensing with the laws of Christ, or of adding to Scripture by tradition, and many of the other claims

* Luke x. 16.

† Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

‡ Matt. xxiii. 8, 9, 10.

advanced by the Bishop of Rome, and for many ages submitted to by a great part of Christendom, were a daring invasion of the sovereignty of Christ; and one of the great principles of Protestantism is a rejection of all authority in the church that is not subordinate to him. Some Protestant churches have been accused of departing from this principle in their practice, by making additions to the laws of Christ, and by exercising, in his name, powers which he did not delegate to his office-bearers. If the charge should in some instances be true, it is only a proof that churches, calling themselves Protestant, often retain some of the corruptions of Popery. But when we apply the general principles to particular cases, it will probably appear that the charge arises merely from a difference of opinion amongst Protestants, with regard to the number and extent of those matters, which the Lord Jesus has left subject to human regulations; and that those who are accused of invading his prerogative are as incapable as their brethren of claiming any authority which they consider as opposite to his authority, or even as co-ordinate with it.

There was a phrase used in England by authority, at the beginning of the Reformation, which gave great offence to the more zealous adversaries of the church of Rome, and appeared to them inconsistent with this third position. It was said in the edition of the thirty-nine articles, which was published in the reign of Edward, "The king of England is supreme head in earth, next under Christ, of the churches of England and Ireland." This was conceived to transfer to the king of England all that usurped power, with regard to the churches in his dominions, which the Pope had exercised with regard to the church universal; and it was said that a title which the apostle seems to give exclusively to Christ, when he calls him "the head of the church," was not fitly applied to any mortal. In order to remove these scruples, the phrase was omitted in the edition of the thirty-nine articles, published in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, which is now the received and authentic edition; and the queen, by a solemn declaration, explained the act of supremacy, which was passed upon the abolition of papal jurisdiction, to mean no more than "that under God she had the sovereignty and rule over all manner of persons born within her realm, either ecclesiastical or temporal; so as no other foreign power shall or ought to have any superiority over them." The confession of faith of the church of Scotland, having been composed at a season, when the circumstances of the times were understood to call for a testimony against the revival of any claims, which might be abused as an engine of spiritual tyranny, declares, chap. xxv. that "there is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ; nor can the Pope of Rome, in any sense, be head thereof." This clause in our Confession of Faith leads us, upon solemn occasions, to use a phrase, which, I believe, is seldom used in England, "The Lord Jesus, the king and head of his church." But the use of this phrase does not constitute any mark of difference in opinion between the two churches, with regard to the third position. For both acknowledge the sovereign authority of the Lord Jesus, to which all other authority in the church is subordinate; and were we to apply this general principle to particular cases, we should

find that the two churches differ less in the application, than superficial observers or hot disputants are willing to allow.

4. The spiritual power implied in church government is given “for edification and not for destruction.” I employ this phrase, because it is used by the apostle Paul, 3 Cor. x. 8, and xiii. 10, in relation to his authority, *εις οικοδομην, και ουκ εις καταλυσιν ὑμων*. It is equally applicable to the authority of the office-bearers of the church in every age; and it expresses most significantly what I mean to include under this fourth position.

Those who entertain just views of civil government consider it as instituted by God for the good of the subjects. It is not for the sake of one, or of a few, to gratify their ambition, and to minister to their pleasure, that others are made inferior to them in rank, subject in many respects to their command, and dependent upon their protection. But all the privileges, and honours, and powers which distinguish individuals, are conferred upon them for the sake of the multitude, that by these distinctions they may be the more proper and successful instruments of communicating to those who are undistinguished the blessings of good government. The spirit of enlarged benevolence, which forms the character of the Gospel, gives perfect assurance, that the church government created by that religion has the like impartial destination. The great prophet, who “came not to be ministered unto but to minister,” “the shepherd and bishop of souls,” who came “to seek and to save that which was lost,” taught his apostles to do as he had done; and they, instructed by his discourse, and guided by his example, spoke and acted as the servants of those, over whom they exercised the authority that was committed to them. “Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy. We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.”* “All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas. Who is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, as the Lord gave to every man?”† Paul reminds the servant of the Lord, to whom was committed the care of the church, that “he must be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth;”‡ and Peter exhorts the elders, who had the oversight of the flock, to behave “not as lords over God’s heritage, but as ensamples to the flock.”||

It is manifest, then, that the government, which Christ had established in his church, was not intended by him to create a separate interest in the Christian society, by aggrandizing a particular order of men, and for their sake placing all others in a state of humiliating subjection. It is one branch of the provision which is made in the Gospel for propagating and maintaining the truth, for restraining vice, for assisting Christians in the discharge of their duty, and for promoting the universal practice of virtue; and when we consider the power which church government implies, as thus instrumental in carrying

* 2 Cor. i. 24; iv. 5.

† 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

‡ 1 Cor. iii. 5, 21, 22.

|| 1 Peter v. 1, 2, 3.

forward the great cause for which Christ died, we are taught to expect in the operation of this instrument the same regard to the reasonable nature of man, and the same tender consideration of every circumstance essential to his comfort, which appear in the other institutions of the Gospel. The exercise of a power which is purely spiritual cannot indeed affect the lives or the outward estate of Christians. But men have other rights as sacred as those which respect their persons or their properties. There is liberty of thought, the right which every man has of exercising the powers of his mind upon any subject, from which he hopes to derive pleasure or improvement. There is the right of private judgment, which necessarily results from liberty of thought, the right which every man has of forming his own opinions, and of determining for himself what he ought to do. He may form the opinion and the determination hastily or upon false grounds; but he is not a rational agent, if he conceives it to be his duty implicitly to allow another to form them for them. There is liberty of conscience, that branch of the right of private judgment which respects our duty to God; the right which every man has of judging what God requires of him, and of resisting any attempt to teach for doctrines the commandments of men, or to impose obedience to regulations merely human, as a matter of conscience towards God.

As these rights belong to the nature of a moral and accountable creature, any power which could claim the privilege of violating them would be given not for edification, but for destruction. It would destroy, not perhaps the person, but the character of the being over whom it was exercised; it would degrade his mind; and it is so diametrically opposite to the general conduct of the Almighty towards his reasonable creatures, to the style of argument by which Jesus always called forth into exercise the understandings of those who heard him, and to all the other parts of the provision which he has made for enlarging and improving the minds of his disciples, that this cannot possibly be the description of any power instituted by him.

It was not necessary to dwell long upon the proof of the third and fourth positions; because, after the meaning of the terms is fairly stated, the truth of them appears hardly controvertible. But it was necessary to enumerate them thus distinctly, because they are the foundation of my fifth general position, which assumes the third and fourth as proven, and applies them to a variety of subjects.

5. The power implied in church government is limited by the sovereign authority of the Lord Jesus, and the liberties of his disciples, both as to the objects which it embraces, and as to the manner in which it is exercised.

It professes to maintain the credit of religion, by preserving the truth uncorrupted, and by watching over the conduct of Christians; and it professes to minister to the edification of individuals, by affording them various assistance in following after righteousness, and by employing various means to reclaim them from error and vice. These objects are in themselves excellent; but it is not competent for church government to take every conceivable method of accomplishing them, because a spiritual power subordinate to the Lord Jesus, and not given for destruction, is restrained by these characters from doing

many things, which, at particular times, may appear expedient. No exercise of any power can be legitimate, which is in direct opposition to the nature of that power; and the evils arising from admitting a contradiction between the general character of the power, and a particular exertion of it, will, in the result, infinitely overbalance any local or temporary advantage, which might be purchased by an exercise of the power that is illegitimate.

In applying the limits suggested by the third and fourth positions, to the power implied in church government, the easiest and safest method is to follow an established distribution. The subject has been so fully canvassed since the reformation, that we may be assured none of the objects which require to be considered under the fifth position were omitted by the many able men, who, with much zeal, particularly in the course of the seventeenth century, combated one another upon the various questions to which it has given birth. Taking, therefore, the distribution which is found in the ordinary systems, I shall divide church power into three parts, which, for the sake of memory, are expressed by three single words, the *potestas dogmatikh*, *διατακτικη*, and *διαχειρικη*. The first respects *dogmata*, doctrines or articles of faith; the second respects *διαταξεις*, ecclesiastical canons or constitutions; the third respects discipline, or the exercise of judgment in inflicting or removing censures.

To each of these three I shall apply the limits and regulations suggested by the third and fourth positions.

CHAPTER IV.

POTESTAS Δογματική.

1. THE *potestas δογματική* is limited and regulated by the sovereign authority of the Lord Jesus, and the liberties of his disciples.

The church of Rome, in the progress of that influence which she acquired over the Christian world, laid down the following positions, which were received as true by the members of her communion:— That the authority of Scripture, its right to the faith and obedience of Christians, depends entirely upon the testimony of the church: that besides the written word, consisting of the books which Christians receive in consequence of the judgment of the church, there is also an unwritten word, of which the church are the keepers: that it does not appear to have been intended that the Scriptures should contain a complete rule of faith and manners; but that this defect, which arose unavoidably from their having been written by different authors upon particular occasions, is fully remedied by those traditions, which, although not written in any apostolical book, have been safely conveyed down through the church from the days of the apostles: that these traditions, pertaining either to faith or to morals, are to be received with the same piety and reverence as the Scriptures: and that the church, by being in possession of this unwritten word, is qualified in its teaching to supply the imperfection of the written word: that the Scriptures, being in many places obscure, it is impossible for the people, by the exercise of their own faculties, to derive from thence the knowledge of all things necessary to salvation; and that their attempting to form opinions for themselves out of the Scriptures, while it cannot lead them certainly to the truth, may produce a multiplicity of dangerous errors, and much bitter contention: that, to avoid these evils, it is, in general, expedient to debar the people from the free use of the Scriptures, or to grant it only to those whom their teachers judge the least likely to abuse that privilege: that the church, being assisted by the Spirit of God in search of the Scriptures, having the promise of the presence of Jesus to the end of the world, and having possession of the unwritten word as a commentary upon the written, is the only safe interpreter of Scripture, and the supreme judge, by whose definitive sentence all controversies with regard to the meaning of particular passages, or the general doctrine of Scripture, must be determined: that it is the duty of Christians to acquiesce in this infallible determination: and that, although they do not understand the grounds upon which it rests, or

although other doctrines than those which the church declares to be true appear to their minds agreeable to Scripture, it is presumption and impiety, a breach of that reverence which they owe to the institution of Christ, and a sin for which they deserve everlasting punishment, to oppose their own private judgment, which cannot of itself attain the truth, and which may depart very far from it, to the decision of the church which cannot err: that the faith which becomes the dutiful subjects of the kingdom of Christ, and by which they are saved, is an entire submission of the understanding to the decisions of the church; a faith which does not include a knowledge of the things believed, which is more fitly defined by ignorance, and which supposes nothing more than an implicit and cordial acquiescence in all that is taught by the church.

The foregoing positions, or doctrines of the church of Rome, are combated in different parts of the ordinary systems. I have brought them together in one view, in order to give a full account of the extent of the *potestas dogmatική*, as claimed by that church. And I need not stop to expose the monstrous nature of a claim, which constitutes the great body of Christians mere machines; which invades the prerogative, and usurps the office and the honours of the great Prophet, whom it is the duty of Christians to hear; and which, by ascribing to the church an infallibility which is nowhere promised, and which is inconsistent with the weakness of humanity, has produced in that church errors, contradictions, and absurdities, which appear to every rational inquirer most disgraceful and pernicious to those by whom they are held.

To so monstrous a claim all Protestants agree in opposing this principle, that the Scriptures are the only rule of faith. This principle they understand to include the following positions:—The authority of the books of the New Testament does not depend upon the judgment of the church. The history of what we call the canon of the New Testament may be thus stated. While many books, which claimed to be written by divine inspiration, were rejected in early times, those which we now receive were declared to be canonical, because they had been conveyed down from the days of the apostles, with satisfying evidence of their authority. This evidence, as laid before those who fixed the canon of the New Testament, consisted of internal marks of authenticity, of which a scholar in every age is equally qualified to judge, of the consent of the Christian world, of the testimony of adversaries to the Christian faith, and of many collateral circumstances, which must have been better known to them than to us, who live at such distance from the date of the books. But had any early council presumed to contradict the amount of this evidence, by rejecting a book which was authentic, or admitting one which was spurious, the voice of the Christian world would have risen against so daring a decision: and the remains of Christian antiquity which have reached our days, would have enabled us to disregard it. In judging then, of the authenticity of the books of the New Testament, we pay no further regard to the decision of the church, than as it constitutes a part of that tradition which must be the voucher of every book written in a remote age; and having satisfied ourselves in the only rational manner—in the same manner as we do with

regard to all other ancient books—that the books of the New Testament were written by the persons whose names they bear, we learn from the evidence of the divine mission of Jesus, and from the nature of the commission given to his apostles, of both which we are qualified to judge, the entire respect and credit which are due to every thing contained in the books.

Now, this credit which is due to the books, not upon account of the testimony of the church, but upon their own account, includes a belief of their sufficiency and their perfection. It does not admit of what the church of Rome calls tradition, or an unwritten word, being put upon a level with them. It implies, that all things necessary to salvation are contained in the books themselves; that the attainment of the knowledge of these things is not attended with difficulties, so insuperable to an individual as to render the judgment of the church indispensably necessary; that every person who has the use of reason may, by a proper exercise of his rational powers, and by availing himself of the opportunities within his reach, satisfy his mind what is the doctrine of Scripture, and understand that doctrine as far as it is necessary he should understand it; and consequently, that no individual Christian is required to exercise an implicit faith, of which he can give no other account than that it rests upon the authority of the church; but that as it is contrary to the laws of his nature to believe what appears to him absurd, so it is a duty, required of him by his divine teacher, to “search the Scriptures,” so as to judge for himself, that what he professes to believe is therein contained, and thus to be able to give a reason of his faith and hope.

By stating the foregoing positions, I have endeavoured to unfold that principle, which, being characteristic of Protestantism, is avowed by all who have departed from the errors of the church of Rome. But it is held under different modifications; and those who agree in receiving the Scriptures as a sufficient rule of faith, and as the only authoritative rule, do not agree concerning the power reserved to the church as the doctrines of religion.

The followers of Socinus, who were among the earliest Reformers, were led, by the general principles of their system, to an extreme solicitude in guarding against the abuses of ecclesiastical authority; and having, upon many points, departed very far from the received opinions of Christians, they were obliged, in self defence, to lay down such a plan of church government, as did not admit that the church at any time possessed the right of intermeddling in articles of faith. The Socinians hold, that as the Scriptures are the rule of faith, the essential articles of faith are so few, so simple, and so easily gathered out of clear explicit passages, that it is impossible for any man who has the exercise of his reason to miss them; that all the mistakes and differences of opinion amongst those who search the Scriptures respect points which are not essential, and concerning which it is both vain and hurtful to try to establish an uniformity of opinion; that it is in all cases a sufficient declaration of Christian faith to say that we believe the Scriptures; that no harm can arise from allowing every man to interpret the Scripture as he pleases; and that, as Scripture may be sufficiently understood for the purposes of salvation, without any foreign assistance, all creeds and confessions of faith, composed

and prescribed by human authority, are an encroachment upon the prerogative of the supreme teacher, an invasion of the right of private judgment, and a pernicious attempt to substitute the commandments of men in place of the doctrine of God.

According to this plan, there is left to the church and its ministers, in their teaching, merely the office of exhortation. Over the doctrines, which are the principles upon which the exhortation proceeds, it is conceived to be incompetent that they should have any control ; and both the proceedings of ecclesiastical assemblies, and the ministrations of private teachers, are understood to depart from their proper sphere, and to be very much misemployed, when, instead of confining themselves to recommendations of the practice of virtue, they intermeddle with points of doctrine, all of which are either so plain, that they cannot be illustrated, or so unimportant, that every one may be allowed, according to an ancient phrase which is often used, to abound in his own sense.

To most Protestant churches this plan appears very defective ; and when I state the following views, you will perceive how far it falls short of the purposes, for which a church seems to have been established by Christ.

The books of the New Testament are written in a language which is now understood only by the learned. Yet, in that language, it was intended they should be sent over the world to be the rule of faith to all Christians. However plain, therefore, these books might be to the nations who spoke that language, the great body of the people in all other countries stand in need of an interpreter. They are ignorant of the meaning of single words and phrases. If different translations are offered, they do not know which is most correct ; and consequently they must remain in doubt and suspense, unless there is some human authority upon which they can rest.

But further, after the meaning of single words and phrases is analysed, there still remain in all ancient books many passages which cannot be understood without a knowledge of local customs ; of points in chronology, geography, and history ; of figures of speech ; and of that peculiar character which every language derives from the manners and the science of those by whom it is spoken. It is impossible that the great body of the people in any country can make the necessary progress in so large and multifarious a branch of study ; so that here also, as well as in the meaning of single words and phrases, they must rest upon the authority of others. Our Lord has not left these wants of his disciples to be supplied in a casual manner, by any person more learned than themselves whom they chance to meet. But having provided, in the constitution of his religion, a standing method of instruction, he directs all, who in searching the Scripture feel their own deficiencies, to have recourse to the persons who are set over them in the Lord. When the apostles went forth to make disciples of all nations, they were enabled, by the gift of tongues, to speak so as to be understood by all who heard them. Now that the written word of the apostles is transmitted to future ages in a particular language, the learning of the Christian teachers may render that written word as intelligible to the people, as if they themselves understood the original language ; and since the Christian teachers appeared to

us formerly, as intended by Christ to constitute a society co-operating for the same great purpose, it is natural to expect that, instead of a private rendering of the Scriptures by every individual teacher, all who minister to persons speaking the same language, will join in preparing or adopting a common translation. This translation, recommended by the concurrent authority of the body of teachers, will give the people all the assurance which the nature of the case admits, or which it requires, that the book which they read is the same in sense with that which was written by the apostles; and this book, receiving in the ministrations of the individual teachers those elucidations, which their knowledge of antiquity, and the fruit of their various studies qualify them to give, will be “profitable” to all “for instruction in righteousness.”

It appears, then, to be unquestionable, that the succession of teachers in the Christian church were intended to be interpreters and expounders of the sacred book; and that one part of the office assigned them is, to afford the disciples of Christ that assistance in learning the truth therein contained, of which, from the nature of the books, the language in which they were written, and the customs of the persons addressed in them, the great body of the people in every country stand much in need. But there is a farther part of their office, in relation to the doctrines of religion, which a due attention to the subject does not suffer us to omit. When we recollect the language and the spirit of the directions given to Timothy and Titus, and when we hear Paul saying to Timothy, ii. 2, “The things that thou hast heard of me, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also,” we are led to consider the succession of Christian teachers as intended to be the guardians of that truth which may be learned from the Scriptures; and the church, the great society composed of those teachers, is presented to our view under the idea of the keepers of a sacred deposit, over which they are appointed to watch. It is by the illustration of this idea that we show the imperfection of what I stated as the Socinian plan.

The foundation of the character of a disciple of Christ is laid in the acknowledgment of a system of divine truth. That system may be learned by searching the Scriptures. But our Lord and his apostles do not lead us to suppose, that it is learned by every person into whose hands the Scriptures are put, or who professes to expound them. Our Lord gives notice of false prophets, who should come to his disciples in sheep’s clothing, while inwardly they were ravening wolves.* The apostles saw the fulfilment of this prediction; and their Epistles abound with complaints of false teachers, men “who corrupted the word of God; who had erred concerning the truth; who subverted whole houses, teaching things which they ought not; who brought in damnable heresies; who were moved not by the spirit of truth, but by the spirit of error; men unlearned and unstable, who wrested the Scriptures to their own destruction.”† The apostles mention many particular errors which had arisen in their days; they combat them with zeal; they call upon Christians to “contend

* Matt. vii. 15.

† 2 Cor. ii. 17. 2 Tim. ii. 18. Titus i. 11. 2 Pet. ii. 1: iii. 16. 1 John iv. 6.

earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints," and to "beware lest any man spoil them through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men;" and they represent it as one of the purposes for which Christ gave prophets, and apostles, and evangelists, *i. e.* for which he established a church, Eph. iv. 13, that Christians might "be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about παντι ανεμῳ της διδασκαλιας, with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." In like manner the apostle thus writes to the Hebrews, xiii. 7, 8, 9. "Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken to you the word of God; whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines." These verses, when taken in connexion, present this whole sense, that as the doctrine of Christ, like himself, is unchangeable, his disciples, instead of hastily adopting the various opinions which may happen to be in circulation, should continue in the truth which they receive from the spiritual teachers, who are set over them in the Lord, imitating their faith. In order to qualify the Christian teachers to perform the important service implied in these passages, the apostle exhorts Timothy, and through him, every succeeding minister of the Gospel to "hold fast the form of sound words." He excites him to the assiduous exercise of his talents in counteracting the restless and insidious attempts of seducers; and he introduces the following words Titus i. 9, 10, 11, into the description of what a bishop or minister ought to be, "Holding fast the faithful word, as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, whose mouths must be stopped." These directions of the apostle apply by parity of reason to the heresies, which he gives notice were to arise in latter times, as well as to those which he himself combated. They impose a duty upon the ministers of religion, and consequently they create a corresponding duty in the people to whom they minister; in other words, while they invest the ministers of religion with some kind of authority in relation to its doctrines, they require a degree of reverence for every lawful exercise of that authority. They teach clearly that an acknowledgment of the truth of Scripture is not a sufficient security for soundness of faith, because they state a perversion of Scripture by those who have received it, as not only a possible case, but as a case which then actually existed: and consequently they imply that it is lawful for the ministers of religion to employ some additional guard to that "form of sound words," which they are required to hold fast and to defend.

Two striking instances of a perversion of Scripture in the days of the apostles are mentioned, the one by Paul, the other by John. In his Epistles to Timothy, Paul speaks of Hymeneus and Philetus, who "concerning the truth had erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrew the faith of some;" *i. e.* they did not deny that the Scriptures speak of a resurrection, but by an allegorical interpretation, they resolved all the declarations of the future resurrection of the body into a figurative expression of the present renovation of the heart and life, which is produced in Christians by the grace of

the Gospel. John, in his first and second Epistles, speaks of deceivers, whom he calls antichrists, persons moved by a spirit in opposition to Christ, "who confessed not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." They did not deny that the Scriptures speak of his manifestation, but they thought that the most rational interpretation of the words of Scripture is found by considering the body of Christ as a phantasm, which answered the purpose of his holding communication with men, without subjecting the Son of God to that degradation, and his religion to the many difficulties, which appeared to them to arise from his being allied with a material substance. Now both these kinds of deceivers, because they did not hold the truth of Scripture, although they spoke the words of Scripture, were opposed by the apostles, who earnestly warned the Christians to beware of their doctrine. In like manner, therefore, when in future ages some arose who said that Jesus is the Son of God, but who gave such an interpretation of that phrase, as rendered it consistent with the opinion which they avowed, that Jesus was a mere man; when others spoke in the language of Scripture concerning the Spirit, but considering that language as meaning nothing more than the influence of God, published as a part of their creed that the Holy Ghost is not a divine person; when others interpreted all the variety of expressions, in which Jesus is said to have died for sin, as meaning only that our sin was the occasion of his death, and that his death tended to take away sin, but not as conveying any idea of atonement; when such opinions arose, and were held, and defended, and propagated by men who professed to venerate the Scriptures, those Christian teachers who considered the divinity of our Saviour, the personality of the Spirit, and the doctrine of atonement, to be important branches of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, were not only warranted, but were called to combat these opinions, to guard "the form of sound words" from corruption, and to warn the Christians committed to their charge against being led aside by these perversions of Scripture. It was not enough to exhort Christians to believe what the Scriptures declared upon these points; for those who were accused of perverting the Scriptures, professed this belief. It was not possible to have recourse to any such infallible authority as that which the apostles exerted, when they branded, as fundamental errors, the doctrines of Hymeneus and other deceivers, who arose in their days. There is clear evidence that Jesus did not intend any such infallible authority should continue to exist in his church; yet in all ages the Scriptures have been liable to perversion; in all ages it appears to have been part of the charge committed to the Christian teachers to maintain and defend the truth; and it is left to them to devise the most prudent and effectual methods of fulfilling that duty.

The mode of fulfilling this duty, to which the Christian teachers very early had recourse, was of the following kind. When they apprehended a danger of the propagation of false opinions concerning an important article of Christian faith, they assembled in larger or smaller numbers, from more or fewer districts, according to circumstances. In these assemblies, which are known by the name of councils, and which gradually assumed the forms essential to the orderly transaction of business in a great meeting, the controverted

points were canvassed; and the opinion, which appeared to the council agreeable to Scripture, was declared in words so contrived, as to form their explicit testimony against the opinions which they accounted erroneous. It is not impossible that this method of deciding controversies was suggested to the early Christians by the practice of the States of ancient Greece, who held councils upon important occasions. But it is of more importance to observe that the method appears to be agreeable both to the nature of the case and to Scripture. It is agreeable to the nature of the case. For the consent of a number of teachers in any doctrine was the best security of their having attained the truth, which their fallibility admitted; and the unequivocal declaration of that consent was the most likely way of conciliating respect for their opinion, and of giving it that authority with the people, which might render it a preservative against error. This method, in itself natural and expedient, may be said to be agreeable to Scripture, and even to have received a sanction from the practice of the apostles. One of the earliest disputes in the Christian church respected the necessity of circumcision. Paul and Barnabas, after having had no small disputation in the regions where they laboured, went up to Jerusalem to consult the apostles and elders about this question. The apostles and elders, having met to consider the matter, and canvassed it at length, came to a definitive sentence, which they published in an epistle to the churches; and Paul, upon his return to the region which he had left, as he went through the cities, Acts xvi. 4, 5, “delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem; and so were the churches established in the faith.”

It was most natural for the Christian teachers in future ages to consider this apostolical council, as a direction and a warrant with regard to the most expedient method of terminating the controversies which arose in their time. Accordingly, when the Arian opinions were propagated with zeal and success in the beginning of the fourth century, a council, which is known by the name of the first general council, was held at Nice under the authority of the Roman Emperor, then become a Christian, and declared in the creed, called the Nicene creed, the divinity and consubstantiality of the Son. A second council, held at Constantinople in the end of that century, declared in opposition to the errors of Macedonius, the divinity and personality of the Holy Ghost; and two councils, held, the one at Ephesus and the other at Chalcedon, about the middle of the fifth century, testified their disapprobation of the systems taught by Nestorius and Eutyches, and declared what continues to be the received opinion in most Christian churches, concerning the union of the divine and human nature of our Saviour.

These four general councils are mentioned with honour in ecclesiastical history, and are spoken of by most Christian writers as entitled to a degree of respect, which is not due to any succeeding council. Not that they were, according to the literal sense of the word, general councils, *i. e.* assemblies consisting of deputies from all parts of Christendom. The difficulties which must occur to every person, who considers what such a meeting requires, are of such a kind, that it has never taken place in fact; and were it practicable, it would not

derive from the number or the universality of the representation an infallible security against error. Neither is the peculiar respect paid to these councils founded on a belief, that every part of their proceedings was conducted in an unexceptionable manner. There might be much faction and altercation, weakness in some of the members, and political views in others. But they are respected, because the opinions which they declared appeared to the great part of the Christian world to be founded in Scripture. We receive the opinions not for the sake of the declaration of the councils; but we honour the councils for declaring opinions which we believe to be true; and we testify this honour by adopting, in our profession of those opinions, the significant phrases by which these early councils discriminated the truth from the errors with which it had been blended. Many of the succeeding councils declared what we believe to be false; and the council of Trent, held in the thirteenth century, which the Christian world had loudly demanded as the most effectual method of reforming the errors of the church of Rome, was so managed by the influence and artifice of the Pope, that it lent its authority to the establishment of those very errors.

When the Protestants of Germany judged it necessary for them to leave a church, whose corruptions they could find no method of correcting, they delivered to the diet of the empire as their apology, what is called the confession of Augsburg; *Confessio Augustana*; and in every kingdom and state, which afterwards left the communion of the church of Rome, an assembly of teachers, held generally by the authority and direction of the state, compiled a confession of their faith, or a declaration of the truths which they believed to be contained in Scripture. These confessions, which differed from one another in some points, were, in general, so framed as to form a testimony against the errors of the church of Rome, without renouncing any of the truths which that church held; the Protestants wishing to hold themselves forth to the world as Christians, who retained the great doctrines of the Gospel unadulterated by any of the heresies which had arisen, and who forsook only those corruptions in doctrine and in practice which a particular church had introduced. From these early confessions arose, in process of time, with some variations, what are called the Thirty-nine Articles of the church of England, what we call the Confession of Faith of the church of Scotland, and the Symbols, Formularies, and Catechisms of other Protestant churches.

When the opinions of Arminius were spreading in Holland about the beginning of the seventeenth century, a council or synod was summoned at Dort by the authority of the States-General; and deputies were invited to attend from the neighbouring principalities, and from the two churches of Great Britain. This council, which is known by the name of *Synodus Dordracena*, after sitting many months, condemned the tenets of Arminius, and published a declaration of the Christian faith upon the controverted points, for which some Protestant churches entertain a high respect, as it is agreeable to their opinions, and which others regard with indifference, or hold in contempt. The result of the synod of Dort is a lesson to the Protestant church, that the expediency of general councils expired with

the division of the Roman Empire; that in the present situation of Christendom it is chimerical to think of obtaining by this method any greater uniformity of doctrine, than already subsists amongst those who have left the communion of the church of Rome; and that in every independent kingdom or state, the Christian teachers, supported by the civil authority, in the manner that is agreed upon, are fully competent, without waiting for the judgment of Christians in other countries to prepare such a general declaration of the Christian Faith, and such occasional preservatives against error, as may answer the purposes for which the church was invested with what we have called the *potestas δογματική*.

The objection commonly made to confessions of faith is, that they are too particular; that a declaration of faith which is meant to unite Christians, should comprehend only the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, without descending to those controverted points, and those niceties of doctrine, upon which men have differed; and that it would in general be better that these confessions were expressed in the language of Scripture, than in the terms of human science.

The persons most ready to bring forward this objection are those whose system excludes some of the doctrines which the great body of Protestants agree in receiving. In their manner of stating the objection, they are careful to conceal their disbelief of particular doctrines, under a zeal for liberty of conscience, and the right of private judgment; and instead of affirming that a confession declares what is false, they choose rather to say, that by the particularity with which it states the received opinion, it abridges and invades that freedom in every thing that concerns religion, which Christians derive from the spirit of the gospel.

The subject has, of late, received much discussion in England. The objection is stated with ability and eloquence in a book entitled the Confessional; and when you turn your attention to this matter, you will easily become acquainted with the answers and replies that have been published. I do not mean to enter into any detail, but simply to lead your thoughts to that answer to the objection, which may be deduced from the principles that have been stated.

It is easy to ask that only fundamental articles should be introduced into confessions; but it is not easy to say what articles are fundamental. There is no enumeration of them in Scripture; and no attempt that has ever been made to enumerate them has given universal satisfaction. The very point upon which different sects divide is, that some account articles fundamental, which to others appear unimportant; and that even things, which all admit to be fundamental, are held by some with such limitations, as to appear to others very much to enervate their meaning. It is certainly not desirable that confessions should descend to minute controversies; and perhaps all of them might be abridged. But the very purpose for which they are composed, being to guard against error, it is plain that they become nugatory, if they deliver the truths of religion in those words of Scripture which had been perverted, or in terms so general as to include both the error and the truth.

In judging how far the particularity of confessions invades the right of private judgment, it is necessary to attend to an essential dis-

inction between the condition of teachers and that of the people. The confession, in which any number of teachers unite, is that "form of sound words," which they think they find in Scripture, and which they consider it as their duty to "hold fast." Every teacher, who belongs to the community, is of course supposed to assent to the truths contained in their confession; and the community of teachers ought not to admit any person to take part of their ministry, unless by his subscribing the confession, or declaring his sentiments in some other way, they know that he entertains the opinions which are there published. Without some such requisition, the confession of the community, and the ministrations of the individual teachers, might be in opposition to one another. Many of them, holding opinions that were condemned in the confession, and animated with zeal for the propagation of those opinions, might instil into the minds of the people the very errors against which it was the purpose of the confession to guard them; and thus the negligence of the community would become the instrument of exposing the people to be "carried about with divers and strange doctrines," of inflaming their breasts with that animosity which generally attends religious disputes, and of bringing upon them those evils from which they would have been preserved, if there had been an uniformity in the doctrine of their teachers. If, then, the church in general, and any division of the church, consisting of the office-bearers of a particular district, united in a society, have a right to declare their opinion concerning controverted points, and if it is part of the duty of their office by a declaration of this opinion to oppose the propagation of error, it follows, by consequence, from this right and this duty, that they are entitled to require from every person, to whom they convey the powers implied in ordination, a declaration of his assent to their opinions. This is merely prescribing the terms of admission to a particular office; it is employing the nature of the office to regulate the qualifications; and it is no infringement of the right of private judgment, because if any person does not possess the qualifications, or does not choose to comply with the terms, he has only to turn his attention to some other office. For if, instead of becoming a teacher, he prefers to continue one of the people in the Christian society, he is under no obligation to declare his assent to the confession, which has been published by the teachers as the declaration of their faith, and the directory of their teaching. How far heretics are liable to censure, will be considered, when we speak of the judicial power of the church. What I am now stating is this essential distinction between the teachers and the people in a Christian society, that the judgment of the body of people is not necessarily concluded under the judgment of the office-bearers; in other words, that the *potestas δογματική*, which we conceive to be inherent in the nature of the church, does not imply a right of imposing upon the consciences of Christians the belief of that which the church has determined to be true.

From this account of the *potestas δογματική*, as exercised by Protestants, it appears to be neither inconsistent with the supremacy of Christ, nor destructive of the liberties of Christians. It is not inconsistent with the supremacy of Christ; because it is purely ministerial, professing to interpret the words of Christ and his apostles; provin.

out of them all the assertions which it publishes ; directing to them as the infallible standard of truth ; and warning Christians against listening to any other doctrine than that which Christ commanded to be taught. The confessions of Protestant churches claim to be true, not in respect of the authority by which they are composed, but in respect of their conformity to the words of Scripture ; and therefore, instead of invading, they assert the prerogative of the Supreme Teacher. Nor is it inconsistent with the liberties of Christians. When Christian teachers either give a general declaration of the faith, or bear testimony occasionally against particular errors, a respect is certainly due to the judgment of the men invested with an office in the church, and exercising this office for a purpose which is declared in Scripture to be important. But this respect does not imply a submission of the understanding. It is acknowledged that the decision, proceeding from fallible men, may be erroneous ; and that it is the duty of Christians to “ judge of themselves what is right, to search the Scriptures whether the things are so, to try the spirits whether they be of God.” This exercise of the *potestas δογματική* may give warning of error ; may detect the sophistry upon which the error rests, and may collect the proofs of the sound doctrine. All these are helps, which private Christians derive from that order of men instituted by Christ for the edification of his body, the church. But the understanding is not overruled, because it is assisted ; with these helps Christians are only better able to exercise their understanding, upon subjects less familiar to them than to their teachers ; and if, after making the proper use of this assistance, they are satisfied that the decision of the church is not well founded, and that what the church brands as an error is agreeable to the word of God, they are perfectly acquitted in the judgment of their own consciences, and in the sight of God, for refusing to adhere to what appears to them an erroneous decision ; and it is as much their duty to hold what they account true, although contrary to the judgment of the church, as it was the duty of the church to warn them against what she accounted an error.

And thus, by the *potestas δογματική*, as claimed by Protestants, the church, according to the true meaning of that expression of Paul, 1 Tim. iii. 15, is “ the pillar and ground of the truth,” *στυλος και ἐδραιωμα της αληθείας* ; not as it is interpreted in the church of Rome, the foundation upon which the truth rests, but the publisher and defender of the truth. In ancient times, edicts and other writings intended for the information of the people were affixed to pillars ; and this was the legal method of promulgation. So the church declares, holds up to public view, the truth recorded in Scripture ; and when the truth is attacked, the church by its decisions supports the truth, stating fairly what had been perverted, and exhibiting the proofs of what has been denied. It remains with those, to whom the church ministers, to compare what is inscribed upon the pillar with the original record, from which it professes to be taken, and to examine the statement and the proofs which are submitted to their consideration. The church discharges its office by warning them against error ; they do their duty, when they listen with attention to the warning, and yet are careful not to be misled by those who are appointed to assist their endeavours in searching after the truth. If, in consequence of fulfil-

ling this duty, they sometimes reject the truth which is proposed to them, and adopt erroneous tenets, this is only a proof, that, in the present imperfect state, uniformity of opinion is not consistent with the free exercise of the human understanding ; and it is unquestionably better that men should sometimes err, than that they should be compelled to the acknowledgment of any system, by an authority which is not competent to fallible mortals, and which destroys the reasonable nature of those over whom it is exerted.

I conclude this subject with stating, that the view which I have given of the *potestas δογματική* is agreeable to the declared sentiments of both the churches in this island. In the twentieth article of the church of England, are these words : “The church hath authority in matters of faith. And yet it is not lawful for the church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God’s word written ; neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be contrary to another. Wherefore, although the church be a witness and keeper of holy writ, yet besides the same, ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of salvation.” In the twenty-first article, it is said, “General councils, forasmuch as they be an assembly of men whereof all be not governed with the spirit and word of God, may err, and sometimes have erred even in things pertaining unto God. Wherefore things ordained by them as necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority, unless it may be declared that they are taken out of the holy Scriptures.” The whole first chapter of our Confession of Faith, concerning the holy Scriptures, is a testimony against the *potestas δογματική* claimed by the church of Rome. In the thirty-first chapter, it is said, “It belongeth to synods and councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith ; and their determinations, if consonant to the word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in his word. All synods and councils, since the apostles, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred ; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as an help in both.”

CHAPTER V.

POTESTAS Διατακτική.

THE *potestas διατακτική*, that which respects ecclesiastical canons or constitutions, is limited and regulated by the sovereign authority of the Lord Jesus, and the liberties of his disciples.

The church of Rome, professing to be the keepers of an unwritten word, out of which they can supply at their pleasure the deficiencies of Scripture, and claiming an authority to which Christians owe implicit subjection, conceive that they have a right to enact laws which bind the conscience, and which cannot be transgressed without incurring the same penalties, which are annexed to every breach of the divine law. They have, in virtue of this claim, made numberless additions to the essential parts of the worship of God, which, although not enjoined in Scripture, they represent as indispensably necessary, in order to the acceptance of the worshipper. They impose restraints in the enjoyment of the comforts of life, in the formation of different connexions, and in the conduct of the business of society: restraints which, although not founded upon the word of God, cannot be broken through without incurring, in the judgment of the church, the guilt of a deadly sin. They not only command, upon pain of eternal damnation, many performances, as fasts, and penances, and pilgrimages, which the Scriptures do not require; but they even enjoin by their authority, as in the case of the worship of images, and other services which appear to us idolatrous, what the Scriptures seem to have forbidden; and they abridge the liberty of Christians by a multitude of frivolous institutions, a compliance with which is not left to be regulated by the discretion and circumstances of individuals, but is bound rigorously upon all, unless the church chooses to give a dispensation from the duty, which her authority had created.

All this constitutes one branch of what Protestants account the usurpation and tyranny of the church of Rome. It appears to them to be an encroachment upon the prerogative of the "one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy," who, having delivered in his word the laws of his kingdom, has not committed to any the power of altering, repealing, or multiplying these laws, but has left his disciples to learn, from his own discourses, and the writings of his apostles, "all things whatsoever he has commanded them to observe." By this encroachment upon the prerogative of the one Lawgiver, the rights of Christians too are invaded; because, instead of having to walk by a precise rule delivered in Scripture, which all may know

their consciences are subjected to regulations indefinite in number, which, depending upon the views and the pleasure of particular men, may not only become oppressive, but may involve them in the most distressing embarrassment, by requiring them, as a condition of salvation, to do that which to their own judgment appears sinful.

Against this usurpation and tyranny, all Protestants have revolted; and in opposition to it they hold that the church has no power to prescribe any new terms of acceptance with God, or any other conditions of salvation than those which are declared in Scripture; that every person who worships God according to the directions which he himself has given, may hope, through the merits of Jesus, to please him, that the law of God is fulfilled by abstaining from what he has forbidden, and by doing what he has commanded; and that God alone being the Lord of conscience, no ecclesiastical regulation can justify us in doing what we account sinful, or in abstaining from what we think commanded; or can so far alter the nature of things as to convert an action, concerning which the word of God has not left any direction, into a necessary indispensable duty, which we may in no situation omit without incurring the divine displeasure.

Notwithstanding these limitations, which the supreme authority of Christ and the rights of his subjects obviously require, there remains a large field for the *potestas διατακτική*, and many questions have arisen amongst Christians concerning the proper and lawful exercise of it within that field.

There is one branch indeed of the exercise of the *potestas διατακτική*, which admits of no dispute. It may be employed in enforcing the laws of Christ; not that the authority of these laws derives any accession from that of the church. But as the church is the publisher and defender of the rule of faith contained in the Scriptures, so she is also the publisher and defender of the rule of practice there delivered. The ministers of religion, in their individual capacity, exhort and persuade Christians to observe this rule. When the rule is generally violated, or when it is perverted by gross misinterpretations which are likely to spread, the teachers of any district united in a society, forming what we call the church of that district, may address an admonition or explanation to all who are of their communion. The interposition of this visible authority may awaken the minds of the people to a recollection of that superior authority which is not an object of sense; and the infliction of those censures, which are within the power of the church, may serve as a warning to those judgments which the Almighty has reserved in his own power. In all churches there are standing laws of the church enjoining the great branches of morality. There are also occasional injunctions and ordinances prohibiting those transgressions which are most flagrant; reproofs and warnings against sins, which at any time particularly abound in a district. As no person who attends to the manners of the world will say that such laws, and injunctions, and reproofs, are unnecessary, so experience does not justify any person in saying that they are wholly ineffectual. While civil government prohibits many immoralities under this view, that they are hurtful to the peace of society, church government extends its prohibitions to other immoralities also, which do not fall under this description; and when the two conspire, as, if

both are legitimately exercised, will never fail to be the case, they are of considerable use in restraining enormity of transgression, and in preserving that decency of outward conduct, which is a great public benefit, and which, with many, might not proceed from the unassisted influence of religion.

It is unnecessary to dwell longer upon this undisputed exercise of the authority of the church in commanding what Christ has commanded, and forbidding what he has forbidden. The discussions, which the *potestas διατακτική* requires, respect those numberless occasions upon which the church is called to make enactments by her own authority. To these enactments there was applied, in early times, the name canons, which is derived from the Greek word κανών. *regula*, and which means to convey that these enactments are not put upon a footing with the laws of Christ ; but, being subordinate to them, are merely regulations applying general laws to particular cases.

The first object of these regulations is what we may call matters of order. The church being a society, in which a number of persons are united, and are supposed frequently to assemble, there must be regulations enacted to give the outward polity of the society its form, to ascertain the terms upon which persons are admitted to bear office in the society, and to direct the time and place of assembling for all the members. It is manifest that such matters of order cannot be left to the discretion of individuals, because the variety of their determinations would produce confusion. It may be supposed that with regard to all such matters, individuals are ready to follow that authority which they unite in recognising ; and if the Christian society is not necessarily dependent upon any human society, but may exist by itself, and has within itself the powers necessary for its own preservation, this authority of order must be lodged in the office-bearers of the society.

One of the most important circumstances of order in the Christian society is the time of holding the assemblies. I do not mean the hours, but the days, of meeting ; a circumstance with regard to which an uniformity may naturally be expected in a society united by the same faith. It has been common for men in all ages to connect the remembrance of interesting events with the solemnization of the days, upon which such events originally happened : and the first teachers of the Gospel appear to have given their sanction to this natural propensity, by changing the weekly rest, from the seventh day to the day upon which Christ rose from the dead. From emotions of respect and gratitude, and from the authority of this example, there was early introduced in the Christian church the annual solemnization of Christmas as the day upon which Christ was born ; of Easter, as the day upon which he rose ; and of Whitsunday as the day upon which the Holy Ghost was poured forth. Although these anniversary solemnities were very early observed, there was not an uniform tradition in the church with regard to the precise day of the year, upon which each of the three events had happened. Even in the second century, there were violent disputes between the Asiatic and the western Christians, whether Easter should be kept always upon a Sunday, or whether, without regard to the day of the week, it should be kept on the third day after the day of the Jewish passover,

which was considered as a type of the death of Christ, and which happened invariably upon the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month. This controversy, insignificant as it appears in our times, agitated the whole Christian world for many years, and was not decided till the council of Nice, giving their sanction to the practice of the western Christians, established throughout Christendom the observance of the day called Good Friday, in remembrance of Christ's death, and of the succeeding Sunday, in remembrance of his resurrection.

In the progress of the superstitions of the church of Rome, a multitude of days were consecrated to the memory of saints; and it was impressed upon the minds of the people, that the scrupulous observance of all the fasts and feasts, which the church chose to ordain, was an essential part of religion. The spirit of the Reformation led men to throw off a bondage, most hurtful to the interests of society, and most inconsistent with the whole character of the Christian religion, which ranks the distinction of days amongst the rudiments of the law, and declares by the mouth of Paul, that "he that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord, and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it."* Upon the principle implied in this declaration, such of the reformers, as wished to depart very far from the corruptions of the church of Rome, abolished those days which from early times had been kept sacred in honour of Christ, as well as those which had been dedicated to the saints; and, as is the case in Scotland, where no day in the year, except the Lord's day, is statedly appropriated to religious service, they retained only the Sabbath, which they considered as of divine institution. It was understood, however, that the church has a power of appointing days occasionally, according to circumstances, for the solemn services of religion, although the annual return of festivals appeared to them to lead to abuse. Such of the reformers, again, as judged it expedient to conform, as far as could be done with safety, to the ancient practice of the church, retained the names of the days sacred to the memory of the apostles, and distinguished with peculiar honour the three great festivals in which the Christian world had long agreed, Christmas, Easter, and Whitsunday. In the church of England, these days are statedly and solemnly observed. Some of the more zealous assertors of the authority which appointed those days attempted, in the seventeenth century, to conciliate greater reverence for the appointment, by placing them upon a level with the Lord's day. They maintained that the change from the seventh to the first day of the week was made, not by divine, but by ecclesiastical authority; they denied the morality of the Sabbath; and they gave the countenance of law to those sports and recreations, after the time of divine service upon that day, which had been usual upon the multiplicity of festivals in the times of Popery.

The controversy concerning the morality of the Sabbath, in which the Puritans and the violent Episcopalians of the seventeenth century eagerly opposed one another, has long since terminated in those rational views which are now generally entertained. That a seventh

* Romans xiv. 6.

part of our time should be kept holy to God, appears to be an express positive appointment of our Creator. On what day of the week that seventh part should fall, is a matter of indifference. But the consent of the Christian world, and many other circumstances, conspire in showing that the change from the last to the first day of the week was made by apostolical authority; and in this respect the Sabbath is clearly distinguished from all the days, which the laws of the church may either statedly or occasionally set apart for the exercises of religion. As to the manner of keeping the Sabbath holy, that significant expression of our Lord, "The Sabbath was made for man,"* and the general principles which he unfolded, as he occasionally touched upon the subject, may preserve his disciples at once from Jewish or Puritanical strictness, and from those levities which party spirit in the seventeenth century enacted by a law. The same principles apply to those days, upon which ecclesiastical authority enjoins the performance of particular services. There may be much expediency and edification in such appointments; they are matters of order, which must be regulated by the powers that are; and any person who wantonly pours contempt upon them, or who obstinately refuses to observe them, knows very little of the spirit of the gospel, and has much need to examine his own heart.

But the principles, upon which obedience to the *potestas διατακτική* ought to proceed, will be more fully unfolded in considering the second object of ecclesiastical canons or regulations.

The Christian society having been founded for this purpose, amongst others, that the members may join in worshipping one God and Father of all, through one Lord Jesus Christ, many of the regulations enacted by the church respect the conduct of divine worship. The Father, indeed, requires from all a worship in spirit and in truth. It were impious to raise up new objects of worship; and Christians are not warranted to make any alteration upon the substance of the two sacraments, or to place any human institution upon a level with them. This would be what the apostle, Col. ii. 23, calls *εθελοθρησκεία*, will-worship, that is, worship of our own framing, which all Protestants agree in disclaiming. Still, in the manner of performing that worship, which is the most strictly agreeable to the genius and character of the Gospel, there are circumstances which the wisdom of God has left to be regulated by human authority. These circumstances respect the decency and solemnity which ought to be maintained in public worship, both for the credit of religion in the eyes of strangers, and also for the purpose of cherishing and preserving a becoming reverence in the minds of the worshippers. There is no man whose conceptions of spiritual objects are at all times so refined, as to be wholly independent of that which is external; and with regard to the generality, there is much danger that if the different parts of the worship prescribed by the gospel were to be performed in a slovenly and irreverent manner, no small portion of the contempt incident to the outward action would be transferred to religion itself.

All these circumstances, which do not make any essential addition

* Mark ii. 27

to the worship of God, which respect merely the manner of its being conducted, and which are intended to maintain the credit of religion, and to excite the devotion of the worshippers by the solemnity of the outward action, are known by the name of rites and ceremonies; and it is understood by all Protestant churches, with the exception only of a few sects, that rites and ceremonies fall under the *potestas διατακτική*.

If the apostles of Jesus had established, by their authority, a precise formulary of rites and ceremonies binding upon Christians in all ages, it would follow that succeeding office-bearers had no occasion and no warrant to exercise this branch of the *potestas διατακτική*; and that it was incumbent upon Christians to follow, without alteration, the rule prescribed to them. Such a formulary might perhaps be extracted out of a book entitled, The Apostolical Constitutions, in which the names of the apostles are prefixed to very particular rules and directions about Christian worship. But the most learned inquirers into Christian antiquity are decidedly of opinion, that this is one of the many spurious books which ignorance and zeal produced in the very first ages of the church; “the work,” as Mosheim says, “of some austere and melancholy author, who, having taken it into his head to reform the Christian worship, made no scruple to prefix to his rules the names of the apostles, that thus they might be more speedily and favourably received.”* The only regulations, therefore, concerning rites and ceremonies, which we have any reason to ascribe to the apostles, are those which we find in their epistles: and the following observations cannot fail to occur to any person who considers them. Some of the directions, which Paul gives to the Corinthians concerning the worship of God in their assemblies, have a manifest reference to the abundance with which extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were then poured forth, and to the abuses which that abundance occasioned; and they apply only by analogy to other states of the church. Other directions of his were dictated by the manners of those times, which have now given place to very different manners.

He intimates that some of the regulations which he prescribes did not proceed from the Spirit of God, but were his own judgment, given by him “as one that had obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.” He concludes the particular directions which occupy 1 Cor. xiv. with these words, “Let all things be done decently, and in order;” and he writes to Titus, “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting.” Laying all these things together, we thus reason. As the apostle, from his own judgment, gave such directions in external matters as the circumstances of his times seemed to him to require; as he committed to the church at Corinth a discretionary power with regard to such matters, by desiring them to “do all things decently, and in order;” and as he charged one minister whom he ordained, to supply what he had left deficient, it is a part of the duty of the office-bearers of the church in succeeding ages—a duty which does not require inspiration, which is included in their ordinary commission, and to which they are fully

* Mosh. Eccles. Hist. Cent. i. Part II. Chap. ii.

competent—to make such regulations with regard to the like matters, as to them appears expedient.

This inference, which the writings of the apostles seem fairly to warrant, is agreeable to the whole genius of the gospel. It requires what is, in the highest sense of that phrase, “a reasonable service.” It does not, with regard to any branch of morality, prescribe what is called “bodily exercise;” but, inspiring those generous sentiments which are in every possible situation the principles of good conduct, it leaves a Christian, in the expression of these sentiments, the full liberty that belongs to an accountable agent. We hold that no particular form of church government is so precisely marked down in Scripture, as to render any other unlawful. There are general rules to which all that bear office in the church of Christ are required to conform, whatever be their names or their distinctions of rank. But these rules admit of that variety in the forms of church government, by which the religion of Jesus is qualified to receive the countenance and protection of all the possible forms which civil government can assume. In like manner we assert that that liberty with regard to rites, which we have inferred from the writings of the apostles, is most agreeable to the character of our universal religion; for the ideas and usages of men differ widely in different countries, and in different states of society. Immersion at baptism, which was commonly practised where Christianity was first published, would, in our northern climates, be inconvenient or dangerous. The posture of reclining on couches, in which the apostles received the bread and wine from Jesus at the institution of the Lord’s supper, not being used by Europeans upon ordinary occasions, is laid aside at that solemn service. The vestures of the ministers of religion, which in one country are thought decent, might, upon many accounts, appear unsuitable in another; and ceremonies, which at their first appointment had a salutary effect, may by accident, abuse, or change of manners, require to be altered or repealed.

It corresponds then with that wisdom which pervades the whole dispensation of the gospel, and with the character of religion fit for all ages and for all climates, that there should be in the church an authority to regulate, that is, to accommodate to circumstances, so as may best promote the purposes of edification, those ceremonies and rites which from their nature are changeable. Such an authority is not inconsistent with the sovereign authority of the Lord Jesus; because it does not presume to alter any thing which he appointed. It admits that reading the Scriptures, prayer, and praise, are unchangeable parts of Christian worship; that the administration of the sacraments ought to be agreeable to the institution of Christ; and that no authority committed to the church can either omit or add any thing essential. It professes only to regulate those things which may be varied, without touching what is substantial; and in the canons enacted for this purpose, far from invading the prerogative of Christ, it professes to follow out the directions which he left by his apostles, and to exercise the authority created by these directions in the manner which is most agreeable to him, because most conducive to the ends for which the directions are given.—Neither is this authority incon-

sistent with the liberties of Christians; because, being exercised purely for the sake of decency and order, it does not profess to alter the nature of those objects about which it is conversant, so as to fetter the conscience. The ceremonies are chosen, because they appear fit for the purpose; and the authority by which they are ordained creates an obligation to observe them; but no such holiness or worthiness is annexed to them, as to render them indispensable to the worship of God. If a person is placed in such a situation, that it is physically impossible for him to obey the ecclesiastical canons which ordain the ceremonies, or that he cannot yield this obedience without much inconvenience and the neglect of some higher duty, he will be accepted by offering that worship "in spirit and in truth," which his Lord prescribes. If he accounts the ceremonies sinful, this judgment, however erroneous it may be, yet if it is deliberately formed after the best consideration which he can bestow, will justify him for neglecting the ceremonies, and will render it his duty to abstain from them. Even while in obedience to the authority by which they are ordained he uniformly observes them "for conscience sake;" if his mind be well informed, he will continue to regard them as in their own nature indifferent, *i. e.* as matters which the law of God has not determined to be either good or evil, which, from views of expediency, have been made the subject of human regulations, but which, from the same views, may be laid aside.

In order to perceive how that authority of enacting ceremonies with which the church is invested, and the correspondent duty of observing them are consistent with the liberties of Christians, it is necessary to form a distinct idea of what is called liberty of conscience. Liberty of conscience, as the word implies, has its seat in the mind. Its essence consists in freedom of judgment, not in freedom of practice. If Christians are required to believe, as doctrines of God, any propositions which his word has not taught, or to receive as commandments of God what his word has not prescribed, their liberty of conscience is invaded. But if their judgment is left free, their practice may, without any sacrifice of their liberty, be restrained by different considerations. The writings of Paul furnish several examples of the restraint of Christian practice without any invasion of Christian liberty; and the best way in which I can illustrate the distinction is by directing your attention to these examples.

Paul teaches that no kind of meat is of itself unclean, and that the distinction of meats, known under the law of Moses, is abolished by the Gospel.* And he mentions it as one branch of that corruption of the Gospel, which was to arise in the latter days, that men should command "to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them who believe and know the truth.†" Yet because many Christians converted from Judaism retained those prejudices as to the distinction of meats, which they had learned from the law; because it would have been sinful in them to eat the kind of meat which they thought unlawful; and because they would have been offended, and might have been led into sin, by imitating their Christian brethren in eating that meat, the apostle declares his reso-

* Rom. xiv. 14—21.

† 1 Tim. iv. 1, 3.

lution to abstain from what, in his own judgment, was lawful, and he exhorts Christians to follow him.” “It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Let us follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” Here is liberty of conscience remaining entire; yet practice restrained by Christian charity. Another example, furnished by the writings of Paul, has relation to Christians converted from heathenism. In the heathen sacrifices, a part of the animal being offered upon the altar of a god, the remainder was consumed by the worshippers at a feast in honour of that god, where he was supposed to be present, and where the worshippers conceived themselves to be partakers with him. Hence a doubt arose among the Christian converts, whether, if they were invited to a feast, and the meat set before them was that which had been offered to an idol, they might lawfully eat of it; or whether the partaking of this meat did not imply upon their part, as it did upon the part of the heathen worshippers, an acknowledgment of the idol, and a testimony of reverence. The apostle decides the matter in respect of the conscience of Christians, by saying, “we know that an idol is nothing in the world,” and consequently that meat is neither the better nor the worse for having been offered to an idol.* But, in respect of the practice of Christians, he says, that as every man had not that knowledge, as some still believe that an idol is something, and notwithstanding that belief might be emboldened to eat by the liberty of him who had knowledge, Christians, for the sake of the consciences of others, ought to refrain from doing what their own conscience would permit them to do. “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient; all things edify not.”† The New Testament, moreover, furnishes an instance in which the liberty of practice with regard to the distinction of meats, and the eating of things offered to idols, which, in certain circumstances, should have been restrained by Christian charity, was also restrained by authority. The council of apostles and elders mentioned in Acts xv. sent this mandate to the uncircumcised Christians in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, “That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood.” Paul was one of the bearers of this mandate, and we are told, that in passing through these countries, he delivered it to the churches to keep. Yet at that very time he was arguing in his epistles, that in respect of conscience, Christians are at liberty to eat every kind of meat. His doctrine asserted that freedom of judgment in which liberty of conscience consists: the decree in which he concurred, and of which he was the bearer, enjoined that restraint upon practice, which circumstances rendered expedient, in those very things which to the judgment appeared free. Nay, liberty of conscience is asserted in the same decree, which restrained the practice of Christians in matters indifferent. For the decree declares that the apostles had given no commandment to those teachers, who said to Christians, Ye must be circumcised. Here then is apostolical authority, issuing by the same decree, a declaration of liberty of conscience, and an injunction as to practice; and we find the conduct of the apostle Paul corres-

* 1 Cor. viii. 4--13.

† 1 Cor. x. 23.

ponding most accurately to the spirit, both of the declaration and of the injunction. At the very time that he was carrying the decree to the churches, he circumcised Timothy, whose father was a Greek, and whose mother was a Jewess.* He did it because of the Jews who dwelt in those parts; considering that Timothy would be a more useful minister of the Gospel amongst them, and more likely to overcome their antipathy to the faith of Christ, when it appeared that neither he nor the apostle, from whom he had received the knowledge of the Gospel, had any objection to his acknowledging his hereditary connexion with the Mosaic dispensation. But when certain Judaizing teachers, who wished to bring Christians into bondage to the ceremonies of the law, would have compelled Paul to circumcise Titus, who was a Greek, he did not yield subjection to them, "no, not for an hour."† In a matter of indifference, he had voluntarily accommodated himself to the prejudices of the Jews: but when an attempt was made to impose that matter of indifference as a matter of conscience, he asserted the liberty of Christians; and thus by these two parts of his conduct, considered as a commentary upon the apostolical decree, he has set an example to the Christian world of the distinction which ought always to be maintained, between liberty of judgment and liberty of practice.

The principles, which may be educed out of the Scripture instances which I have mentioned, apply to all that has ever been known in the Christian church under the name of rites and ceremonies. While they vindicate the lawfulness of this branch of the *potestas διατακτική*, they serve also, when fully considered, to establish the rules which ought to be observed in the exercise of it; and they illustrate the foundation and the measure of that obedience which is due to the enactments.

The rites and ceremonies of the Christian church, agreeably to the general rules of Scripture, ought to be of such a kind as to promote the order, the decency, and the solemnity of public worship. At the same time, they ought not to be numerous, but should preserve that character of simplicity which is inseparable from true dignity, and which accords especially with the spiritual character of the religion of Christ. The apostles often remind Christians, that they are delivered from the ceremonies of the law, which are styled by Peter "a yoke which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear."‡ The whole tenor of our Lord's discourse, and of the writings of his apostles, elevates the mind above those superstitious observances in which the Pharisees placed the substance of religion; and, according to the divine saying of Paul, "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."§ The nature of this kingdom is forgotten, when frivolous observances are multiplied by human authority; and the complicated expensive pageantry of Roman Catholic worship, together with the still more childish ceremonies which abound in the Eastern or Greek church, appear to deserve the application of that censure which the apostle pronounced, when he represented the attempts made in his days to revive the

* Acts xvi. 1, 3.

† Acts xv. 10.

‡ Gal. ii. 3, 4, 5.

§ Rom. xiv. 17.

Mosaic ritual, as a "turning again to weak and beggarly elements."* The multiplicity of external observances is not only an unnecessary burden, to which Jesus did not mean to subject his followers, but it has a tendency to substitute "the rudiments of the world," in place of a worship "in spirit and in truth." While it professes to render the services of religion venerable, and to cherish devotion, it in reality fatigues and absorbs the mind; and it requires such an expense of time and of money, that, like the heathen amidst the pomp of their sacrifices, Christians are in danger of thinking they have fulfilled their duty to God by performing that work, which the ordinance of man had prescribed, and of losing all solicitude to present to the Father of Spirits that homage of the heart, which is the only offering truly valuable in his sight. Further, all the Scripture rules and examples suggest, that in enacting ceremonies, regard should be had to the opinions, the manners, and prejudices of those to whom they are prescribed; that care should be taken never wantonly to give offence; and that those who entertain more enlightened views upon the subject should not despise their weak brethren. Upon the same principle, it is obvious, that ceremonies ought not to be lightly changed. In the eyes of most people, those practices appear venerable which have been handed down from remote antiquity. To many, the want of those helps, to which they had been accustomed in the exercises of devotion, might prove very hurtful; and frequent changes in the external parts of worship might shake the steadfastness of their faith. The last rule deducible from the Scripture examples is this, that the authority which enacts the ceremonies should clearly explain the light in which they are to be considered, should never employ any expressions, or any means of enforcing them which tend to convey to the people that they are accounted necessary to salvation, and should beware of seeming to teach that the most punctual observance of things in themselves indifferent is of equal importance with judgment, mercy, and the love of God.

If there is an authority in the church to enact rites and ceremonies, there must be a correspondent obligation upon Christians to respect that authority; and the same considerations of order, decency, and edification, which establish the existence of the authority, require the obedience of Christians. The more nearly that the manner of exercising this authority approaches to the rules which we have deduced out of Scripture, it will the better answer the purpose of the institution, and will be entitled to the more willing obedience. But it must be carefully marked, that the rules, which those who exercise the authority ought to prescribe to themselves, are not the measures of obedience. There is no authority vested in the hands of fallible men, which is, upon all occasions, exercised in the best possible manner. Yet we do not conceive that the subjects of civil government are absolved from their allegiance, merely because they think that the laws prescribed to them might have been enacted with more wisdom. From the peculiar nature of the *potestas διατακτική*, there is hardly a possibility of its being exercised in such a manner as to give entire satisfaction to every understanding. Between the unnecessary mul-

* Gal. iv. 9.

tipiication and parade of ceremonies upon one hand, and a hurtful deficiency upon the other,—between the regard which antiquity claims upon one hand, and the consideration due to occasional offence upon the other, the shades are numberless; and were the precise medium always attained by those who have authority, it might, for opposite reasons, be condemned by persons of different habits and views. The rule of peace and order, therefore, with regard to the members of the Christian society, is compliance with the ceremonies which are established by authority, unless they appear to them unlawful. In particular circumstances, they may find it necessary to protest against a multitude of ceremonies which they consider as burdensome, or against any attempt to impose things indifferent as a matter of conscience. But if there is nothing unlawful in the ceremonies that are appointed, they have need to deliberate well whether it is justifiable for such a cause to disturb the peace of society, or whether it is not more agreeable to the quiet, condescending, and accommodating spirit of the Gospel, while, by judging that the things are indifferent, they keep their minds free from bondage, to maintain that conduct which “gives none offence to the church of God.”

This last was not the judgment of that description of men known by the name of Puritans, whose opposition to this branch of the *potestas διατακτική* forms a large portion of the ecclesiastical history of Britain for above a century, and produced very important effects upon its civil government. Early after the Reformation, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the Puritans objected in general to the lawfulness of imposing ceremonies by authority, as an abridgment of the liberty of Christians in matters not commanded by the word of God; and they objected, in particular, to the vestments appointed to be worn by the clergy in their public ministrations, because, having been worn in times of Popery, they had then been abused to superstition and idolatry. They objected also to the lawfulness of using the sign of the cross in baptism, of kneeling at the Lord's supper, and of other observances of the like kind. The objections were answered by asserting the power of the church in regulating matters indifferent, by stating the prudential considerations which led the church of England to retain some of the popish ceremonies, in the hopes of keeping the Papists within the church; and by declaring, as is done in the preface to the Common Prayer Books, “That no holiness or worthiness was annexed to the garments of the priests; and that while the excessive multitude of ceremonies used in times of Popery was laid aside, some were received for a decent order in the church for which they were first devised, and because they pertained to edification, whereunto all things done in the church ought to be referred.” These answers did not remove the objections of the Puritans. The controversy was agitated with much violence during a great part of the seventeenth century. It was the subject of numberless publications, of debates in parliament, and of judicial discussion. The Puritans, not content with argument and petition, employed various methods of inflaming the minds of the people, and made many attempts to obtain their object by faction and commotion. The church, irritated by opposition to her authority, was little disposed to condescend to weak consciences, in points which might have been yielded, and often employed

severity to bend those whom she could not convince. It is not my province to enter into a detail of these proceedings, or to compare the conduct of the different parties. I mention them only as furnishing the most interesting occasion, upon which this branch of the *potestas διατακτική* was thoroughly canvassed. There probably were faults on both sides; and the reflection, which the whole history of that period suggests to us, is this, that we have much reason to congratulate ourselves upon living in times, when a knowledge of the nature and the measure of church authority is conjoined with a respect for those principles of toleration and condescension, which, although most congenial to the spirit of the gospel, were, for many ages, little understood by the disciples of Christ. The application of these principles, and the manner in which they may be reconciled with the legitimate exercise of church power, will be illustrated after we have considered the last branch of that power, which we distinguished by the name of *potestas διαχειριτική*.

CHAPTER VI.

POTESTAS Διαξειτουργική.

THE *potestas διαξειτουργική*, that which respects discipline, or the exercise of judgment in inflicting and removing censures, is, like the other two branches, limited and regulated by the sovereign authority of the Lord Jesus, and the liberties of his disciples.

We found formerly that this branch of power belongs to the church. Even a voluntary association has an inherent right of removing those who are judged unworthy of remaining; and the church, that society constituted by Jesus Christ, into which it is the duty of his disciples to enter, is invested by its Divine Founder with the right of exercising, by its ministers, the office of admonishing, reproofing, suspending, or excluding from the privileges of the society, according to the conduct of the members. In order, however, to perceive in what manner the exercise of the power implied in this office is regulated and limited by the sovereign authority of Christ, and the liberties of his disciples, it is necessary to recollect particularly the words in which the power is conveyed or expressed, and the claims which have been founded upon the interpretation of them.

When our Lord said to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven,"* he seems to have intended to explain this figurative expression, by adding, in the words then addressed to Peter, but afterwards addressed to all the apostles, "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."† After his resurrection our Lord "breathed on the apostles, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."‡ The apostle Paul, in the exercise of that authority thus given to the apostles, judged that the incestuous person at Corinth should be "delivered unto Satan;"§ and he says of Hymeneus and Alexander, who "concerning faith had made shipwreck, I have delivered them unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."||

The expressions used in these passages of Scripture occur in the earliest accounts of the discipline exercised by the Christian church: and the practice of the church in primitive times explains the sense in which these expressions were understood. When disciples of Christ, who had dishonoured his religion by committing any gross immoral

* Matt. xvi. 19.

§ 1 Cor. v. 3, 4, 5.

† Matt. xviii. 18.

|| 1 Tim. i. 19, 20.

‡ John xx. 22, 23.

ity, or by relapsing into idolatry, were cut off from the church by the sentence of excommunication, they were kept, often for years, in a state of penance, however desirous to be readmitted. They made a public confession of their faith, accompanied with the most humiliating expressions of grief. For some time they stood without the doors, while the Christians were employed in worship. Afterwards they were allowed to enter; then to stand during a part of the service; then to remain during the whole: but they were not permitted to partake of the Lord's supper, till a formal absolution was pronounced by the church. The time of the penance was sometimes shortened, when the anguish of their mind, or any occasional distress of body, threatened the danger of their dying in that condition, or when those who were then suffering persecution, or other deserving members of the church, interceded for them, and became by this intercession, in some measure, sureties for their future good behaviour. The duration of the penance, the acts required while it continued, and the manner of the absolution, varied at different times. The matter was, from its nature, subject to much abuse; it was often taken under the cognizance of ancient councils; and a great part of their canons was employed in regulating the exercise of discipline.

From a perversion of several parts of the primitive practice, and from a false interpretation of the passages which have been quoted from Scripture, there arose gradually that gross corruption of the *potestas διακριτική*, which prevailed in the church of Rome. It came to be understood that the sentence of excommunication, by its own intrinsic authority, condemned to external punishment; that the excommunicated person could not be delivered from this condemnation, unless the church gave him absolution; and that the church had the power of absolving him upon the private confession of his fault, either by prescribing to him certain acts of penance, and works of charity, the performance of which was considered as a satisfaction for the sin which he had committed, or by applying to him the merits of some other person. And as, in the progress of corruption, the whole power of the church was supposed to be lodged in the Pope, there flowed from him, at his pleasure, indulgences or remissions of some parts of the penance, absolutions, and pardons, the possession of which was represented to Christians as essential to salvation, and the sale of which formed a most gainful traffic.

It is unnecessary to state how opposite this system of the *potestas διακριτική* is, both to the sovereign authority of the Lord Jesus, and to the rights of his disciples. Instead of holding them accountable to their Master in heaven, who alone "is able to save and to destroy," it teaches them to depend for salvation upon conforming to the caprice, and gratifying the avarice of men, equally subject to him, and often more corrupt than themselves.

To avoid any approach to this system, one fundamental principle must never be forgotten, that the future and eternal punishment of sin is in the power of God; that none can forgive sins, so as to deliver from that punishment, but God alone; and therefore, that the judgments pronounced by the church can respect only those external censures and penalties of sin, which it has the power of inflicting, and which, consequently, it has the power of removing. Holding this

principle, of which the whole system of religion affords unquestionable assurance, we cannot give a proper interpretation of the passages which I quoted from Scripture, without making a distinction between that branch of the judicial power of the church which is merely declarative, and that which is authoritative. We are taught in Scripture, that sin deserves the wrath of God, both in this life and in that which is to come ; that every obstinate and impenitent sinner shall certainly endure the everlasting effects of this wrath, but that all who repent and believe in Christ have “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins;” and thus by faith in him are delivered from the power of Satan, and translated into the kingdom of God. This is the great doctrine of the Gospel, which the church is appointed to publish by the ministry of the word, and which her ministers apply, according to circumstances, to those over whom their office gives them inspection. When, by virtue of that inspection, they are called to attend to the transgressions of a particular person, the general doctrine is applied to warn him of the danger of sin ; and when he becomes ashamed of his conduct, it is applied to compose his mind with the hope of forgiveness. This application may be accommodated to his temper and situation, with a prudence that renders it more useful to him than any general discourse ; and it claims his attention, because it proceeds, not from an individual, but from those who are set over him in the Lord, and who speak in the name of their Master, from whom they derive a commission to make this application. They may be mistaken in judging of the sincerity of his repentance ; for although it is possible that the gift of discerning spirits, with which the apostles were endowed, might enable them to know whether a person, who had sinned, was qualified by the state of his mind to receive forgiveness from God, and so might direct them infallibly in retaining and remitting sins, yet, as no such gift now exists in the church, succeeding office-bearers may often retain the sins which God is ready to forgive, and remit those which he sees cause to condemn. But as the office of the church, in regard to the future and eternal consequences of sin, is merely declarative, no evil can arise from the fallibility of those by whom that office is exercised. They only publish a general truth : they call the person to whom the publication is specially addressed, to examine himself how far he is concerned in that truth, and they leave the determination of his final condition to God, who knows his heart.

But there is another branch of the judicial power of the church which is authoritative, in which those, by whom the power is exercised, act, strictly speaking, as judges, pronouncing a sentence, the effects of which operate in virtue of their right to judge. To understand the manner in which our Lord has expressed this authoritative power, you will observe, that “the kingdom of heaven,” the keys of which he gave to Peter, and, as Protestants believe, to the other apostles also, does not in the passage referred to, mean that state of glory for which Christians are prepared by the discipline of this life ; but, according to a phraseology often used by our Lord, it denotes the dispensation of the gospel, that spiritual economy which he has established, his church, the great society of which he is the head. You will find “the keys of the kingdom of heaven” commonly divided in

theological books, into two, the key of doctrine and the key of discipline. This is the very distinction which I am now making, between the declarative and the authoritative power of the church. By the key of doctrine, the office-bearers interpret, declare, and apply the truth; by the key of discipline, they have the power of admitting into the church and excluding from it. In reference to this figure of the keys, there is added by our Lord, in explication, the other figurative expression of "binding and loosing." For, as he who has the keys of a prison is invested with the office of imprisoning or releasing from prison, so those who have "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," i. e. the power of admitting into the church and excluding from it, are invested with a judicial office, in the exercise of which their sentences bind upon men their sins, so that they are prevented from entering into the church, or loose them from their sins, so that they find admission. The bodily act of binding is put for that sentence of condemning, which, after his resurrection, our Lord expressed by "retaining sin;" the bodily act of loosing for that sentence of absolving, which he then expressed by "remitting sins." The phrase "delivering unto Satan," has, in like manner, a reference to admission into the church. For the gospel represents the existence of two opposite kingdoms; one in which Christ is king; the other in which Satan reigns. Persons at their baptism renounced Satan; there was ἀποταξίς Σατανα; συνταξίς Χριστοῦ. When they were excluded from the church, they returned, were sent back to that kingdom of Satan, out of which at their baptism they had been translated.

The administration of baptism to grown persons supposes, on their part, previous instruction, and submits the judgment of their qualifications to those by whom they are baptized. Infant baptism is indeed administered indiscriminately; but there is a subsequent act, either confirmation, as in the church of England, or, as with us, admission for the first time to the Lord's supper, by which those who had been baptized are, at the age of discretion, formally received into the church, so that their qualifications also are submitted to the judgment of the office bearers. We saw formerly, that the same persons, who are invested with the office of admitting into the church, are also invested with the office of excluding from it. The two offices, which we naturally expect to be conjoined, make up what is meant by the key of discipline or jurisdiction; and as Jesus says, "I give this key," the two offices are a legitimate part of the constitution of his church, the exercise of which, far from being any invasion of his sovereignty, is an act of obedience to him, and a fulfilment of his purposes. He has left directions to the persons employed in those offices, for the due observance of which they are accountable to him; and when they conform to his directions, the acts performed by them in the exercise of these offices are his acts, which, being done in his name, and by his authority, will receive his sanction. But there is no promise of infallibility to those to whom the offices are committed. They are called to exercise their own judgment in applying general directions to particular cases. They may wilfully, or from some corrupt motive, pronounce an unjust sentence; or, with the best intentions, they may be mistaken. It is impossible that Jesus can give his sanction to any sentence pronounced in opposition to his own directions; and, there-

fore, with respect to him, such a sentence is the same as if it had not been pronounced. His subjects may, indeed, suffer by sentences, excluding those who ought to be admitted, or admitting those who ought to be excluded. But this is an inconvenience of the same kind with those, which always must result from power being lodged in the hands of fallible men. It does not affect the final salvation of any, because that depends entirely upon the judgment of God; and even with regard to those external privileges which may be unjustly withheld, or improperly communicated, the inconvenience is not altogether without remedy. For, as Jesus can compensate by his grace for the want of those external privileges, which are only the means of conveying grace, so there are cases of necessity, in which Christians are justified in departing from the established order of the church, and in resorting to an extraordinary method of enjoying that comfort and edification, of which they are deprived by the tyranny or gross abuse of its office-bearers.

Having thus seen that the *potestas διαχειριτική*, when rightly understood, is not inconsistent either with the sovereign authority of Christ or with the liberties of his disciples, it may be observed, in general, that it must be of equal extent with the other two branches of the power of the church; that is, that the censures and penalties must somehow be applicable in all the cases which come under the *potestas δογματική* and the *potestas διατακτική*. For, if any one case were totally withdrawn from the *potestas διαχειριτική*, the power of the church would in that case be nugatory; because being left without defence, it might be despised with impunity. Yet the nature of things may require a very great difference in the mode of exercising the *potestas διαχειριτική* upon different occasions; and there may arise, from principles already explained, limitations and regulations of that power which all Christians, who “know what manner of spirit they are of,” will not fail to observe.*

* For the application of the principles mentioned above, to the different objects about which the *potestas διαχειριτική* is conversant, and for the account of our national church, which the plan of the Lectures embraces, the reader is referred either to the author's View of the Constitution of the Church of Scotland, or to his Theological Institutes. The last work also contains the conclusion of the Lectures, viz. Observations on the different parts of the Office of a Parish Minister, and Counsels respecting the manner of performing them properly.

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